RURAL YOUTH ACTION PLAN
CONTENTS

The Rural Youth Action Plan (RYAP) 2021–2025......................... 1

A. Goal.......................................................................................................................... 2

B. RYAP’s pillars and outcomes................................................................. 3

PILLAR 1

Support youth participation in rural development, within the context of integrated landscape and territorial approaches .............................................................. 3

Outcome 1.1.............................................................................................................. 4

Outcome 1.2.............................................................................................................. 4

PILLAR 2

Foster youth employment in an inclusive green economy within the three pillars of sustainability: social, environmental and economic.................. 5

Outcome 2.1.............................................................................................................. 6

Outcome 2.2.............................................................................................................. 6

PILLAR 3

Strengthen rural youth capacities for the use of innovative approaches and technologies in food and agriculture.......................................................... 7

Outcome 3.1.............................................................................................................. 8

Outcome 3.2.............................................................................................................. 8

PILLAR 4

Promote rural services for youth and agripreneurs..................................... 9

Outcome 4.1.............................................................................................................. 10

Outcome 4.2.............................................................................................................. 10

PILLAR 5

Building FAO institutional capacity to address rural youth areas of work............ 11

Outcome 5.1.............................................................................................................. 12

Outcome 5.2.............................................................................................................. 12
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Acronym</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3ADI</td>
<td>African Agribusiness and Agro-industries Development Initiative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3ADI+</td>
<td>Accelerator for Agriculture and Agroindustry Development and Innovation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COAG</td>
<td>Committee on Agriculture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FAO</td>
<td>Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ICT</td>
<td>Information and Communication Technology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ILO</td>
<td>International Labour Organization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RBAs</td>
<td>Rome-based agencies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RYAP</td>
<td>Rural Youth Action Plan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SDGs</td>
<td>Sustainable Development Goals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UN</td>
<td>United Nations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNESCO</td>
<td>United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNIDO</td>
<td>United Nations Industrial Development Organization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNTWO</td>
<td>World Tourism Organization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WFP</td>
<td>World Food Programme</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The Rural Youth Action Plan (RYAP) 2021–2025

The FAO Conference in 2017 endorsed the call to develop a rural youth action plan that addresses the importance of making rural areas more attractive for young women and men. Under the aegis of the Committee on Agriculture (COAG), the Rural Youth Action Plan (RYAP) was developed and presented at COAG’s Twenty-seventh Session in 2020.

To strengthen areas of collaboration and synergy in the RYAP, FAO, in 2019, when developing the Plan, undertook consultations with Member Countries as well as with the Rome-based agencies (RBAs): International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) and World Food Programme (WFP), and several other United Nations (UN) entities and specifically, the International Labour Organization (ILO), UN Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD), UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR), UN Population Funds (UNFPA), UN International Children’s Fund (UNICEF), UN Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO), UN Women and the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) as joint members of the UN Inter-Agency Network on Youth Development (IANYD). 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 (MGCY) and the Young Professionals for Agricultural Development (YPARD). The outcomes of the consultations are reflected in the RYAP.

The Plan presents a five-year Action Plan (2021–2025), aligned to five thematic areas (or pillars) with the goal of contributing to the realization of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by equally empowering rural young women and men.

At corporate level, in its Strategic Framework 2022–31, FAO, has identified the themes of gender, youth, and inclusion (for reduced inequalities and leave no one behind, LNOB), as cross-cutting and important issues that need to be taken into account across all of FAO’s programmatic work, which require particular visibility. In doing so, the intent is to promote a more systematic mainstreaming and operationalization of these issues across all of FAO’s work. The four betters identified - better production, better nutrition, a better environment and a better life - will reflect the interconnected

FAO’S POSITION ON YOUTH AGEFRAME(S)

FAO, while following the UN youth ageframe (15–24) for statistical purposes at global level, at operational level, in countries, it follows the specific Member Countries’ youth definition

To note: Attention should be placed on the needs of younger youth within the youth ageframe but still minors (ageframe 15–17). These younger youth, although they might have reached the legal working age (depending on countries’ legislations, 14–15 years old in most countries), are also still within the children ageframe definition. The overlap on these ageframes’ definitions for this specific age-group was intentional in order to extend legal protection up to the age of 17 (inclusive) as per the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) which is a legally-binding international agreement.

Employment-focused interventions for youth below the age of 18 are important to facilitate their school-to-work transitions, but need to avoid drawing children into child labour situations, and thus need to target only youth of legal working age and engage them only in safe tasks.
The goal of the RYAP is 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. This will be achieved through improved policy guidance, supporting governments and other stakeholders and targeting of FAO’s normative and field programmes on youth-related issues, with a view to strengthen youth participation in decision-making processes and access to education, decent employment and rural services.

The RYAP predominately contributes to SDG 1 (end poverty), 2 (end hunger) and 8 (sustainable economic growth and employment) as well as SDG 4 (education), 5 (gender equality), 6 (water), 7 (energy), 13 (climate action), 10 (reduced inequalities), 11 (sustainable communities), 14 and 15 (life on land and in water), and 17 (partnerships for the goals).

The RYAP serves as the guide for the implementation, monitoring and reporting of FAO’s youth-specific and youth-sensitive activities.

The RYAP has five pillars that follow the five priority themes and main outcomes and outputs as indicated below.

A. GOAL

B. RYAP’s pillars and outcomes
Support youth participation in rural development, within the context of integrated landscape and territorial approaches

Sustainable rural development needs to take into account different land uses, livelihood needs and socioeconomic factors, all of which shape social and ecological outcomes at various scales. Integrated landscape and territorial approaches strive to meet the needs, interests and values of all women and men of all generations and ethnic groups who live in a given ‘territory’ while also addressing biophysical and ecological objectives and requirements. It recognizes spatial, sociopolitical and environmental diversity and supports equitable decision making and governance systems. Such approaches address the economic, social and environmental interlinkages and through participatory approaches identify optimal use of assets and resources in a given space to ensure sustainable transitions that create synergies and reduce tradeoffs. Such an approach is therefore suited for addressing multiple interlinked challenges such as the climate emergency, degraded natural resources and ecosystems and the economic decline in rural areas. Considering such challenges are being further exacerbated by the current COVID-19 pandemic, especially in rural areas, these approaches need to ensure sustainable and resilient transitions that respect the specificities of different territories, making sure to leave no one behind (FAO, 2017). This will require economic inclusion and targeted social protection measures, to address the immediate emergency but also ensure to
“build back better” approach. Youth have demonstrated their increasingly important role in meeting these global challenges.

The RYAP aims at increasing youth awareness of integrated landscape and territorial approaches, support increased youth participation, instill ownerships in landscapes and create the means for youth to be positive active agents of change. Guidelines will be developed to ensure approaches, tools and methodologies are youth and child sensitive, and public policy support measures will be strengthened for incentivizing youth engagement in the formulation, governance and implementation of landscape and territorial development strategies and programmes. Youth-focused capacity-building tools for the formulation, implementation and evaluation of rural development public polices, including those needed for strengthening family farming will also be developed. Programmes will also be strengthened for the protection of individuals below 18 and adolescents from the worst forms of child labour, including hazardous labour, contributing to the FAO Framework on Ending Child Labour in Agriculture. Guidance will also be created to build government capacity on youth sensitive social protection measures.

OUTCOME 1.1:
Integrated landscape and territorial approaches created that incorporate the needs and aspirations of young women and men. Indicative outputs:

→ Youth and child sensitive integrated landscape and territorial strategies developed through participatory processes that include the vision of youth constituencies in its formulation, governance and implementation.

→ Institutional and legal frameworks and strategies developed which foster improved natural resource governance, ensure secured access to land for youth and promote farm transfer and generational turnover.

→ Capacities of governments strengthened to integrate youth sensitive resilience and emergency responses into landscape and territorial approaches.

OUTCOME 1.2:
Strengthened self-organization of youth within rural communities and interconnected urban areas. Indicative outputs:

→ Youth participation strengthened in rural decision-making processes fostering their role as innovators and agents of change.

→ Generational sustainability for sustainable natural resource management and food supply networks strengthened.

→ Innovative sustainable solutions promoted for young agripreneurs especially through global, regional and country fora.
Many of the world’s ecosystems and natural resources are overexploited and degraded while they need to continue providing food, clean water, energy and other essential economic, social and environmental goods and services to a growing population. This is further aggravated by challenges such as climate change and other emerging shocks such as the COVID-19 epidemic. Major transitions are required for sustainable production systems and consumption patterns in order for countries to achieve their SDGs. This requires major efforts,

1 Based on the Rio+20 principles (https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/rio20/futurewewant) and the agreed definition “A green economy is defined as low carbon, resource efficient and socially inclusive”

especially in rural areas, to build resilience, reduce investment risks, develop relevant infrastructures and create market opportunities, for example through the provision of environmental services, carbon trading as well as creating products with a price premium, such as, for example, through fair trade, geographic indication and organic products.

High value agricultural products and niche markets also offer opportunities to rural youth and especially to young women. Consumers

2 Bioeconomy is the production, utilization, conservation, and regeneration of biological resources, including related knowledge, science, technology, and innovation, to provide sustainable solutions (information, products, processes and services) within and across all economic sectors and enable a transformation to a sustainable economy - Global Bioeconomy Summit Communiqué, 2020.
are becoming more interested in fair trade, organic and natural products. As structural transformation proceeds, modernizing approaches are needed. These should be designed to facilitate the transition to both greater specialization and diversification in production and trade to an increasing number of rural youth in agriculture. Furthermore, agrotourism, culinary tourism, herbal medicine and natural cosmetics are becoming popular, in particular among the younger generation, which is rediscovering local tradition and culture as a counterrlead to globalization. Rural youth are, if supported and facilitated, able to exploit these rising opportunities thanks to their creativity, flexibility and interest in addressing novel and niche markets while also ensuring overall sustainably produced food.

Sustainable innovations in farm and non-farm rural employment and in agricultural value chains have the potential of creating

OUTCOME 2.1:
Promote government policies which ensure youth- and gender-sensitive transitions to the green economy. Indicative outputs:

- Sustainable bioeconomy policies and strategies are in place to promote inclusive food systems and sustainable decent jobs that are youth- and gender-sensitive.
- Policy uptake and adoption of technical guidance achieved through the establishment of distribution and information measures that are effective even during physical distancing measures.
- Guidance generated that empowers young people to contribute to issues related to environmental services.

OUTCOME 2.2:
Initiatives supported that allow young women and men to equally access sustainable jobs and participate in the bioeconomy. Indicative outputs:

- Sustainable innovations, including technologies and practices are introduced across value chains sectors including non-food sectors such as agro-tourism and eco-tourism.
- Youth-sensitive methodologies developed and used to assess the policy implications, business validity, resource efficiency and cultural-sensitivity of sustainable production systems and value chains.
- National, regional and global partnerships strengthened to support the creation of sustainable bioeconomies that are youth-and gender-sensitive.
PILLAR 3

Strengthen rural youth capacities for the use of innovative approaches and technologies in food and agriculture

Formal education (such as schools, universities, vocational schools and training institutions), non-formal education (such as community groups, farm schools, and structured initiatives) and informal education (such as intergenerational knowledge transfer, peer-to-peer and community forums) are essential for capacity development, knowledge sharing and changing behaviors required to allow sustainable school to work transitions to occur and ensuring equal involvement of young women and men. Education not only improves employment opportunities but also addresses issues such as informal jobs, as the level of informality decreases when education increases (ILO, 2018).

Innovation, including in information and communication technology (ICT), increases the opportunities for the exchange of farm and value-chain information, and supports the cross-fertilization among research, innovation and traditional and Indigenous knowledge. ICT also creates opportunities to access inputs and services, identify potential markets and job opportunities, and create linkages between rural and urban areas. In addition, it can also provide options compatible with physical distancing measures required under COVID-19. ICT, however, to be effective will need to be tailored to the specific rural contexts taking into consideration the needs of young women and men and function with the
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.
Indicative outputs:

- Policy guidance allows national policy makers and local entities to develop youth sensitive educational and capacity building programmes related to agricultural value chains.
- Extension and educational resources developed or adapted to address identified opportunities that connect local traditional and Indigenous knowledge with new innovations.
- Educational resources for school and youth organizations developed that increase knowledge and raise interest in agriculture, instill environmental and social consciousness and ensure the adoption of balanced diets and sustainable lifestyles.
- New research and lessons learned used to create more effective capacity building strategies, programmes, initiatives, curricular and youth-led knowledge and support mechanisms.

OUTCOME 3.2:
Young men and women capacities developed through ICTs, agribusiness support programmes, Junior Farmer Field and Life Schools, education clubs and related mechanisms.
Indicative outputs:

- Agriculture Digital Innovation Hubs strengthened to address key knowledge gaps and improve youth adoption of digital technologies and innovative practices.
- Youth entrepreneurship skills strengthened through Sprint programmes and other related initiatives that connect youth with global agri-tech companies.
- Improved learning and information achieved through optimized Junior Farmer Field and Life Schools (JFFLS), distance learning tools and other mechanisms including partnerships (such as 4H Clubs).
- Guidance on improving informal education mechanisms, including intergenerational knowledge transfer, used to strengthen youth capacity development initiatives.
The achievement of the SDGs requires a significant increase in investments in sustainable agriculture. In this context, attracting youth to agriculture and empowering them to carry out sustainable investments is crucial since it will have significant positive impacts on food security and nutrition, economic development, employment creation and the reduction of forced migration. Furthermore, specific incentives for rural young people may also strengthen their attachment to the rural environment and the motivation to live and start activities in such contexts. It is essential to strengthen youth access to services, including (micro-) credit and (micro-) financial services, and those for land acquisition. Other crucial services include advisory services on enterprise development, market information as well as equitable access to innovations such as e-commerce platforms and e-banking. Sustainable interventions also require incorporating youth-specific investment incentives into national investment promotion strategies, as well as working with youth organizations to strengthen their capacities to provide services and engage in policy dialogues. In addition the use of specific rural youth orientated incentive schemes can increase youth attachment, retention and recruitment to rural areas. Rural infrastructure, including internet connectivity and other services, such as social, health and education services will also be essential in creating opportunities in both agricultural sectors and other sectors such as tourism. Transitioning towards a sustainable resilient future will also require youth policies and targeted social protection and safety-net measures that address recurrent or foreseeable shocks, such as climate change, as well as the recent COVID-19 epidemic. Other needed accompanying measures would include opportunities to incentivize family care facilities, family planning and social assistance.
The FAO Umbrella Programme “Supporting Responsible Investments in Agriculture and Food Systems” supports FAO Members through strategic planning, capacity development and policy dialogue with youth on investment incentives and services. FAO also collaborates with UNIDO under the joint flagship initiative: “Opportunities for Youth in Africa: Accelerating Jobs Creation in Agriculture and Agribusiness” (OYA) as well as other initiatives such as the “Accelerator for Agriculture and Agroindustry Development and Innovation” (3ADI+), the African Agribusiness and Agro-industries Development Initiative (3ADI), Agrinvest, as well as non-agriculture activities and environmentally-friendly business, such as agrotourism and ecotourism (FAO, IFAD & CTA, 2014). Furthermore, a Youth-Sensitive Value Chain Analysis Guide (YSVCA guide) is currently being finalized and field tested in selected countries. Key in creating the enabling environment are also the work on the Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land, Fisheries and Forests, as well as the Voluntary Guidelines for Sustainable Soil Management.

### OUTCOME 4.1:
Youth entrepreneurship and decent jobs promoted and investment strengthened. Indicative outputs:

- Policy measures and incentives to enhance youth access to farming assets, financial services and markets are identified, developed, disseminated and implemented.
- Youth sensitive investments attracted through evidence base assessments of economic opportunities, including analysis of gaps in policies, services and social protection measures.
- Youth capacity to engage in responsible investment in food and agriculture systems supported through multistakeholder think-tanks, agricultural hubs, mentorship programmes and other youth participatory processes.
- Public policies established that incentivize youth engagement in agriculture and along its value chain, create new economic opportunities for young people and support farm succession and improved generational turnover.

### OUTCOME 4.2:
Youth communities, organizations and networks supported in accessing rural services, including agricultural measures. Indicative outputs:

- Capacity of national and local institutions strengthened on innovations linking sustainable production to consumers and markets for improved diets and reduced malnutrition.
- Young women and men have increased access to land, finance and markets, including through the creation of multi-partner incubator platforms (such as IFAD’s Agri-Hubs).
- Youth, including Indigenous, involved in participatory approaches of FAO’s Voluntary Guidelines that initiate work on youth’s access to land and natural resources.
- Policy guidance ensures that humanitarian and emergency responses, including social protection schemes are youth sensitive and promote long term sustainable rural transitions.
One of the key objectives of the RYAP is to initiate a more systematic and strategic approach in how FAO addresses youth related issues. Although there is considerable improvement from the past, certain technical areas still need to be strengthened to ensure they are youth and children sensitive. Staff, including from regional and country offices, may not necessarily have the capacity to develop programmes that are relevant for their country contexts, or undertake adequate youth participatory processes. In addition, country offices often are not equipped to address youth issues in new UN country processes and ensure that the needs and views of the different rural youth constituencies are represented. Guidance is also required to support the integration of children and youth issues in FAO technical programmes and projects. Identifying suitable mechanisms needs to take into consideration that FAO does not have a dedicated coordination unit (or even officer), nor a dedicated regular programme budget for such work.

Strengthening partnerships with relevant organizations can help mitigate these internal limitations, and empowering youth to be partners, can provide considerable strength at global, regional, country and most importantly, grassroots levels. Building on each organization’s strengths will allow to work at larger scales and strengthen advocacy efforts. RYAP will therefore strengthen collaborative efforts with regards to institutional capacities and participatory youth networks. This will include creation of joint initiatives, improved coordination in regional processes and country implementation, the development of joint knowledge products and training materials, as well as resources such as policy and guidance briefs.
OUTCOME 5.1:
FAO’s capacity strengthened to strategically deal with rural youth issues by capitalizing as much as possible, on existing programmes. Indicative outputs:

→ FAO programmes and projects are youth and child sensitive and youth-participatory through the provision of guidance and staff capacity development.

→ Youth related indicators incorporated into sustainability and SDG assessment framework and evidence base used to monitor and strengthen the impact of programmes and initiatives.

→ FAO network of divisional, regional and country youth and child focal points strengthened to exchange and disseminate youth-relevant information and created more integrative programmes.

OUTCOME 5.2:
Partnerships established and youth participation in UN processes supported in view of establishing a specific youth engagement network/mechanism. Indicative outputs:

→ UN inter-organizational collaboration mechanisms strengthened on children and youth issues, in particular at regional and country level and with the RBAs, to collaborate on related initiatives.

→ Youth able to engage in FAO and related UN processes through interlinked networks and participatory engagement mechanisms.

→ Youth and child sensitive strategic planning advocated and funds mobilized in support of youth interdisciplinary responses.