

## Follow-up to previous CFS work: Engaging, Recruiting, and Retaining Youth in Agriculture

Human capital and talent are critical drivers of growth, sustainability and security across the entire food chain. There is a need to recruit new talent, particularly youth, to agriculture. In the US alone, 60,000 skilled jobs in agriculture are needed each year, but currently universities are only graduating 61% of the numbers needed to fill those jobs.

Despite the recent modest renewal in public sector investments in agriculture, there have been disinvestments in extension programmes and agriculture education – at the primary, secondary and tertiary levels - at the same time universities have disinvested in agriculture colleges. In many developing countries, especially in Africa, the higher agricultural education system is experiencing serious problems of low quality, irrelevancy, lack of funding, poor infrastructure, low faculty morale, and high graduate unemployment.

Furthermore, there is a lack of appropriately-trained and work-ready people in the agriculture sector, a factor contributing to food and nutrition insecurity. Some of the primary skills lacking are numeracy, agronomics, communications, business management (specific to the food and agriculture sector), marketing, finance, logistics, food processing, and broad, yet critical, teamwork and management skills.

### Contribution to the achievement of the SDGs:

This topic is related to SDG target 2.1:

*by 2030 end hunger and ensure access by all people, in particular the poor and people in vulnerable situations including infants, to safe, nutritious and sufficient food all year round.*

As well as SDG target 4.7:

*By 2030, ensure that all learners acquire the knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development, including, among others, through education for sustainable development and sustainable lifestyles, human rights, gender equality, promotion of a culture of peace and non-violence, global citizenship and appreciation of cultural diversity and of culture's contribution to sustainable development.*

As well as Goal 8: *Promote inclusive and sustainable economic growth, employment and decent work for all.*

### Relevance and global impact

With close to 40 % of the global workforce, agriculture is the world's largest provider of jobs, employing over 1.3 billion people throughout the world<sup>1</sup>. Nevertheless during the 20th century, the quantity of farmers has declined in every part of the world—from 35 to only 4.2 percent in developed nations between 1950 and 2010, and from 81 to 48.2 percent in developing countries.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> FAOStat in 2011, based on a global workforce of 3.3 billion people.

<sup>2</sup>

IFAD and International Labor Organization (ILO) through [http://www.momagri.org/UK/agriculture-s-key-figures/With-closeto-40-%25-of-the-global-workforce-agriculture-is-the-world-s-largest-provider-of-jobs-\\_1066.html](http://www.momagri.org/UK/agriculture-s-key-figures/With-closeto-40-%25-of-the-global-workforce-agriculture-is-the-world-s-largest-provider-of-jobs-_1066.html)

UN statistics cite: “Global unemployment increased from 170 million in 2007 to nearly 202 million in 2012, of which about 75 million are young women and men.”

There is an inextricable link between encouraging young people to make viable livings in the agriculture and food sectors and meeting Goals 2 and Goal 8 to Promote inclusive and sustainable economic growth, employment and decent work for all.

Considering that the world will need to feed nine billion people by 2050<sup>3</sup>, a 70% increase in global agricultural production is crucial. This scenery demands greater labour force, people with adequate education and training who will be able to transform agriculture into a more productive, sustainable, competitive and efficient sector. Long term sustainability in agriculture requires a locality-specific knowledge base and technical competence including the up-skilling of the current workforce with diverse and more complete training programs.

Add to the challenges of hunger and food insecurity, a latent ageing of the farm workforce is an emerging issue – the average age of farmers is now in the range of late-50s to early 60s in parts of Africa, the United States, Europe and Australia.

In many developing countries, especially in Africa, the higher agricultural education system is experiencing serious problems in many fields like funding and infrastructure. Furthermore there is a big disconnect between agriculture education and the marketplace which ultimately leads to high graduate unemployment.

Incentives and campaigns that encourage young people to see agriculture as real possibilities for their career are needed.

#### CFS value added and contribution to CFS objectives

CFS is ideally placed to highlight constraints, opportunities, and recommendations which include:

- Improving the mechanisms for sharing knowledge, adaptive strategies, and more sustainable techniques is the means to achieve the Millennium Development Goals (and beyond), food security and nutrition, and improved livelihoods.
- High degree of knowledge needed in farming to manage multiple variables.
- Improving impact on sustainable development of all forms of agriculture.
- The centrality of education and skills to sustain food production in the face of the vagaries of weather, climate change, political instability, market volatility, and increasing pest pressures.

#### Knowledge and evidence:

It is proposed that CFS takes stock of evidence, including challenges, opportunities, and existing partnerships and programmes that can provide policy-relevant, evidence-based advice around the following:

- Examples of talent development in agriculture
- Concrete investments in education, know-how and manpower of youth in agriculture

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<sup>3</sup> <http://www.ifad.org/media/press/2014/12.htm#sthash.i6RmZX7U.dpuf>

- Opportunities and challenges to empower young rural talents
- Incentives and campaigns that encourage young people to see agriculture as real possibilities for their career.
- What actions are being done to promote demand-driven and innovative agriculture education, training, and skills development programmes in agriculture?
- How can we recruit and retain youth and women in agriculture through incentives and the promotion of conducive environments for equitable access to secure land tenure, inputs, financial services, knowledge, and markets?
- What examples can be found of national agricultural plans and resource mobilisation strategies to enhance talent development in agriculture?

#### No duplication

In October 2013 the Committee on World Food Security (CFS) held a Round Table entitled “A Plan of Action to Build Knowledge, Skills, and Talent Development to Further Food and Nutrition Security”. The endorsement by the CFS of this topic signaled talent development in agriculture would take increased precedence in the United Nations food security agenda. However after 2014, the CFS has not followed up on this topic. This workstream would contribute to identify the areas where actions are needed at local, regional and international level, through multisectorial policy approaches and inclusive mechanisms that engage civil society, private sector, universities and research institutions.

This workstream could foster convergence by creating policy recommendations to encourage the engagement of youth in agriculture. The CFS also could hold a special panel to look at programmes at the national and regional level to promote youth in agriculture and foster greater cooperation among actors working on youth programming.