

## Private Sector Mechanism Position Paper

### ENGAGING, RECRUITING, AND RETAINING YOUTH IN AGRICULTURE

By 2050, the world will have to feed as many as 9.7 billion people. One key to success in tackling this global challenge is to engage young agricultural leaders and equip them with the knowledge, resources, and access to markets needed to produce and distribute food to feed the world.

**The PSM's goal is to actively contribute to increased engagement, recruitment, and retention of youth in agricultural professions.**

PSM will support the following to further engage young people in agriculture:

**1) Legitimize and celebrate agriculture as a viable and profitable professional choice.**

- Reframe agriculture as a business choice that is intellectually, socially, and financially rewarding, as well as one in which young people can have an incredible impact on issues such as climate change, hunger, displacement, poverty, and more.
- Support initiatives, such as educational programmes, conferences, and experiential learning opportunities, that share success stories and inspire young people to become agricultural leaders from an early age.
- Celebrate school feeding and early childhood food security programmes that nurture a lifelong commitment to sustainable food production.
- Create innovative partnerships and collaborations with existing entities, including youth groups, research institutions, and schools, as well as with non-adjacent industries and organizations.
- Invest in the rural-urban continuum to allow agricultural professionals to engage with the social and cultural benefits of cities without sacrificing the needs of the farm.

**2) Recruit talent into agriculture.**

- Showcase the diversity of career options within the food system to attract talented young people with demonstrated interest in such areas as biology, environmental science, agricultural engineering, plant science, politics, economics, marketing, business, sales, and more.
- Connect young agricultural leaders from diverse countries and regions to scholarships, professional development opportunities, mentors, and networks.
- Highlight successes of young agricultural leaders and empower them to serve as role models for others.
- Celebrate national strategies that incentivize entry into the field, especially those that support fair compensation to farmers, work to alleviate stigmas against agricultural professions, simplify access to markets, and mobilize government resources for knowledge sharing between countries and sectors.
- Provide farmers platforms to share their innovative work in agriculture that advances the SDGs.
- Support value adding for youth through innovation throughout the agrifood value chain.

**3) Develop systems with the unique needs of young people in mind.**

- Work to eliminate high barriers to entry into agriculture, especially for young people who do not inherit land and/or knowledge from their families.

- Create and publicize opportunities to access innovative financing, access to credit, land tenure laws, accessible trainings, and ongoing professional development, with attention to the fact that the timeline for agricultural innovation is longer than that for other industries and therefore implies greater risk.
  - Encourage innovative uses of technology throughout the agrifood chain to capitalize on the strengths of young people and maximize yields; use technology, automation, and data-driven aspects of modern farming to engage more young farmers.
  - Encourage governments to leverage resources to give youth, women, and new farmers advantages in penetrating new markets and territories.
  - Support young farmers as they grapple with the effects of changing weather patterns, political instability, market volatility, and increasing pest pressures, and work to minimize these pressures to the greatest extent possible.
  - Design education initiatives that acknowledge the importance of national and regional culture and ensure relevance by engaging local and traditional knowledge.
  - Incentivize agricultural R&D, including R&D supported by farm groups, co-operatives and private sector
- 4) Commit resources to develop knowledge and capacity among the next generation of farmers and agripreneurs.**
- Encourage inclusion of agri-food in the curricula of every primary and secondary education.
  - Invest in tertiary education for agriculture, with a focus on numeracy and finance; agronomics; communications and marketing; agriculture-specific business management; supply chain management; logistics; food processing and value addition; and innovative retail.
  - Structure university programmes that train students to practically apply academic knowledge in the marketplace.
  - Invest in agricultural colleges and universities in the form of monetary support, diligent knowledge sharing, ongoing development for instructors and professors, practical learning approaches that integrate academic and production-focused learning opportunities, and more.
  - Improve rural advisory services, with a stress on (1) focusing on best-fit approaches, (2) embracing pluralism, (3) using participatory approaches, (4) developing capacity, and (5) ensuring long-term institutional support.
  - Incorporate information on sustainable agri-food practices into extension and professional development programmes
  - Capitalize on the unique strengths and opportunities of developing countries, as the policy and regulatory environments of the developing world can allow for more nimble innovation and adaptation.
  - Reduce post-harvest losses through proper storage and transportation by creating cooperative storage facility for youth to access.
- 5) Integrate youth engagement with the movement for gender equality in agriculture.**
- Support causes that ensure that girls have equal access to the education necessary to prepare them for a career in the agrifood chain.
  - Commit specific effort to attracting and supporting women farmers.
  - Work to break cycles of intergenerational poverty suffered by women farmers, while also actively working to dispel the association between agricultural careers and poverty.
  - Support actors who acknowledge the unique needs of women and proactively challenge systems that disenfranchise them.
  - Celebrate initiatives that make agrifood professions accessible to both men and women of varying physical and mental abilities and a broad spectrum of ages.