

## Five steps to engage Africa's youth in agriculture and rural development

About 11m young Africans entered the labour market in 2014 alone, but few see opportunities in the agriculture sector and are constrained by a lack of skills, low wages, and limited access to land and financial services - making them more prone to migrate from rural areas. According to the Director-General of the UN Food and Agriculture Organization, José Graziano da Silva at a joint African Union-European Union meeting, hosted at FAO headquarters in Rome, youth employment should be at the centre of any strategy to face economic and demographic challenges in Africa.



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"Fostering sustainable agriculture and rural development is essential to absorb these millions of youth looking for a job," Graziano da Silva said. "A sustainable world can only be achieved with the full engagement of young people. They must feel integrated and believe that a more peaceful and prosperous world is possible."

The one-day meeting was co-hosted by the African Union Commission, the European Commission and the Estonian Presidency of the EU Council and was attended by Ministers of Agriculture of the African Union and the European Union. The aim was to build a common vision on how to generate sustainable, inclusive jobs for African youth in the rural sector.

### Five step solution

The director-general outlined five steps to engage youth in agriculture and rural development. Firstly, enhance youth participation and leadership in producer organisations and other rural institutions to empower them to engage in policy dialogue.

Secondly, stimulate private sector investments to create a modern and dynamic agricultural sector and value chains, and to build the infrastructure needed for agricultural investments.

Thirdly, provide rural areas with better services such as electricity, education, and health.

The fourth step is to strengthen the physical, economic, social and political links between small urban centres and their surrounding rural areas.

Finally, invest more in Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) which has the potential to improve efficiency in some farm work and facilitate access to markets, information and business opportunities.

### **Supporting youth in rural areas**

FAO is supporting the implementation of many programmes that target youth in rural areas. Uganda, for example, has adopted FAO's Junior Farmer Field and Life Schools methodology, funded by Norway, Sweden, and Belgium. This simple but efficient programme teaches vulnerable children and young people about farming and management skills.

In Nigeria, FAO is supporting the design of the National Youth Employment in Agriculture Programme, and FAO and the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) have joined forces to increase jobs and business opportunities for young people in rural areas of Benin, Cameroon, Malawi, and Niger through a \$4m grant made available by the Africa Solidarity Trust Fund.

The conference outcomes will be presented at the Africa-EU Summit in November and will guide future work of both the European Commission and the African Union Commission.

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