INFORMATION & COMMUNICATION DIRECTORATE

Media Advisory

Venue: Virtual Event

Youth employment opportunities in Agri-food systems in Middle East and North Africa:
A Webinar

29 March 2022

INVITATION TO REPRESENTATIVES OF THE MEDIA

WHAT: Webinar on Youth employment opportunities in agri-food systems in Middle East and North Africa

WHEN: 29 March 2022

14:30 – 17:00 (Eastern African Time)

12:30 – 15:00 (Central European Time)

WHERE: Zoom virtual platform:

Please register in advance:
https://meetoecd1.zoom.us/meeting/register/tJArd-mhqzotHNbsyriQUUkv6fzgcaNNttub

How: A joint event by the African Union Commission and the OECD Development Centre Webinar on Youth employment opportunities in agri-food systems in Middle East and North Africa will be opened in the presence of the leadership and officials of the AU Commission, AU Member States, representatives of RECs, CSOs and Partners

WHO: This event is organized by the African Union Commission (AUC), Department of Agriculture Rural Development, Sustainable Environment and Blue Economy (DARBE) and the OECD Development Centre

SPEAKERS:

1. Representatives of the AUC Commissioner for Agriculture, Rural Development, Blue Economy and Sustainable Environment, AUC

2. Representative of the OECD Development Centre

BACKGROUND:

The COVID-19 crisis and its economic and social impacts have disrupted nearly all aspects of life for everyone in society. Lockdown measures have had particularly severe repercussions on the most vulnerable groups in societies, particularly youth, informal workers and women who rely on daily income generating activities for their subsistence. Policy efforts made thus far for youth risk being jeopardized and budget priorities shifted away from youth programmes. Excluding youth from a society's central sectors can generate tremendous social and economic costs and may even lead to social and political unrest as witnessed in 2011.

Several Middle East and North African (MENA) governments have been taking important steps to integrate gender and youth perspectives in the elaboration of their COVID-19 immediate responses. Resilience, adaptability and adequate resourcing remain at the core of recovery strategies. However, the recovery is also an opportunity to look at long-term pathways towards building a better future, adapting to global megatrends and preparing for future challenges. Post-COVID measures will need to consider how to support youth to overcome this crisis and ensure their sustainable livelihoods.

As part of the OECD project "COVID-19 Response and Recovery of MENA Region", financed by the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, the OECD Development Centre is looking at employment challenges faced by youth during the COVID-19 crisis in three countries in the MENA region: Egypt, Morocco and Tunisia. In particular, it will analyse opportunities for job creation in sectors with high growth potential that remain under-invested, such as the agri-food sector. Indeed, growing populations, urbanisation and rising incomes of the middle class are increasing demand for more diverse, value-added agricultural and food products in Africa.

This rise in food demand can boost job creation along the local agri-food value chains if adequate investments are made to build efficient local food systems. The recent OECD study on Jobs for Rural Youth (2021) estimates that from 2019 to 2030, about 20 million additional jobs are expected to be created in the food economy in 11 subSaharan African countries analysed. Youth are also at the centre of the African Union (AU) development agenda. The Agenda 2063 aspires to achieve an equal prosperity of the continent based on inclusive and sustainable growth, driven by the potential of its peoples, women and youth.

The Malabo declaration on Accelerated Agricultural Growth and Transformation for Shared Prosperity and Improved Livelihoods identifies specific youth- related targets such as creating job opportunities for at least 30% of youth in the agricultural value chains.

The Africa Common Position to the UN Food Systems Summit (July, 2021) reiterates the importance the AU gives to enhance the continent's food systems as a means to improve competitiveness and create jobs. One of the game-changing solutions proposed is to promote intraAfrican food trade by fostering local productivity and value addition, while ensuring integration of family food producers in regional agricultural value chains.

OBJECTIVE OF THE MEETING :

The expert meeting, co-organised by the OECD Development Centre and the Department of Agriculture, Rural Development, Blue Economy and Sustainable Environment of the African Union Commission (AUC), aims to:

- Provide a general overview of youth in agri-food systems related policy priorities, strategic programmes, and frameworks of the African Union, including the recently adopted African Agribusiness Youth Strategy and the Africa Common Position to the UN Food Systems Summit.

- Better understand challenges faced by youth in the MENA region in light of the COVID-19 crisis and to explore policy options as countries embark on post-COVID recovery strategies, with a focus on opportunities in the agri-food sector.

- Discuss the role of public policies to support short food supply chain models and local small and medium entreprises in the agri-food sector for youth job creation.

For More Information on the event:
1. **Ms. Ji-Yeun Rim,** Senior Policy Analyst, OECD Development Centre ji-yeun.rim@oecd.org
2. **Dr. Janet Edeme,** Head of Rural Development Division, AUC Edemej@africa-union.org

For Media inquiries:
- **Ms. Peace Lydia Mutuwa**, Department of Rural Economy and Agriculture, African Union Commission Email mutuwap@africa-unin.org
- **Mr Molalet Tsedeke,** Directorate of Information and Communications; AU Commission Email: molalett@africa-union.org

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