

INFORMATION & COMMUNICATION DIRECTORATE

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Investment Guidelines for Youth in Agrifood Systems in Africa launches



The African Union Commission (AUC) and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) launched new guidelines for scaling up investments in agrifood systems for youth in Africa, during the 32nd Session of the FAO Regional Conference for Africa (ARC32).

The [Investment Guidelines for Youth in Agrifood Systems in Africa](#) provides practical “how to” steps to develop youth-focused and youth-sensitive investment programmes that see youth as partners in rural development, throughout all phases of the investment programme cycle. The guidelines are for those involved in designing and implementing agrifood investment programmes, such as governments, financial and technical partners, the private sector, civil society, and young women and men themselves.

The Guidelines were also presented and endorsed by the African Union Fourth Ordinary session of the Specialized Technical Committee on Agriculture Rural Development Water and Environment (ARDWE) in December 2021.



In her remarks, H.E. Amb. Josefa Sacko, Commissioner for Agriculture, Rural Development, Blue Economy and Sustainable Environment of the African Union Commission called on AU Member States, Regional Economic Communities (RECs), development partners, private sector and financial institutions to buy into and implement the Guidelines so as to accelerate investments for youth in agri-

food systems in Africa. It has great potential to bring investments in youth-focused agri-food systems initiatives to scale” she said.



“The Investment Guidelines are a direct response to the call to scale up investments in and with Africa’s youth,” said FAO Director-General Qu Dongyu in Malabo. “There is an urgent need to address the gaps and multiple constraints faced by Africa’s young people, particularly in the rural sector. The impacts from the COVID-19 pandemic have raised this urgency even higher,” he added.

The Investment Guidelines aim to contribute in achieving the commitments outlined in the Sustainable Development Goals and the African Union Agenda 2063 by accelerating investments for and by youth in agri-food systems, taking into consideration the diversity of their constraints, needs and aspirations. It is expected to reinforce the perception of youth not as a vulnerable group but as a development partner, advisor and innovator.

A continent of young people

Africa as a region has the highest percentage of youth in the world, estimated at 420 million people between the ages of 15 and 35. This is an enormous resource for future prosperity, but the challenges these young people face are many.

The Young people are twice as likely as adults to be unemployed. The majority of working youth are poor and employed in vulnerable, low-quality jobs in the informal sector. In 2019, almost two-thirds (63 percent) of young workers lived in poverty in Africa compared to half (51 percent) of adults. Youth are also over represented among the extremely poor. On top of this, young women, especially in rural areas, face gender-biased social norms, laws and practices that limit their involvement in gainful work and seizing development opportunities. Agrifood systems transformation can

address these challenges, opening up vast employment and entrepreneurial opportunities for young women and men in agricultural value chains and across food systems.

Youth are key to building sustainable agrifood systems

The guidelines highlight the importance of youth as change agents and key stakeholders contributing to sustainable agrifood systems. They aim to accelerate investments in and by youth in agrifood systems by providing practical guidance - including tools and examples - to design, develop, implement, monitor and evaluate youth-focused and youth-sensitive investment programmes and to engage youth fully as partners in the entire process.

Agrifood systems are under pressure from climate change, chronic and emerging conflicts and the impacts of COVID-19, undermining their ability to provide healthy and affordable food for all. But youth are resilient and innovative. It is crucial to invest differently and engage them as central players driving the transformation of agrifood systems. This includes through expanding automation, digital technologies and the green economy. Young people bring in new ideas, solutions, products and services, new models of entrepreneurship, partnerships and networks. Failing to invest in youth could lead to economic and social costs and threaten agrifood systems' sustainability.

The [Investment Guidelines for Youth in Agrifood Systems in Africa](#) aim to accelerate investments in and by youth in agrifood systems. They recommend four steps to investing in youth : 1) Engage youth in the investment programme cycle; 2) Assess and pre-design with a youth lens; 3) Design with a youth lens; 4) Implement then monitor, evaluate and capitalize on what you learn.

FAO and the AUC developed the Guidelines drawing from research, case study analysis of successful programmes, multistakeholder consultations and a widely-attended technical validation workshop.

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