

**RESEARCH  
ARTICLE**

## Involving Young People in Agricultural Development:

why it's critical for the sustainability of the sector

By Courtney Paisley

### Background

**A**gricultural development specialists and policymakers around the world are concerned that young people are not interested in remaining in rural areas and taking up farming. Agriculture is rarely the first choice of many who study it. Agriculture holds no prestige and young people taking it up as a livelihood are not considered success stories in their communities.

While there will always be farmers and farming will remain a livelihood for many, the concern is that those who are not keen on entering the sector will not invest in it with an interest in innovating within the industry. Are there enough young people committed to creating a viable future for themselves in the sector?

A study in Uganda indicates that young people in agriculture are often looking for ways to get out of the profession. The results of the study which asked young people about their current jobs and future job aspirations, demonstrate that those in agriculture would prefer employment in another sector. This may mean that they are spending time on seeking alternative employment rather than investing in a stronger, better agricultural sector.



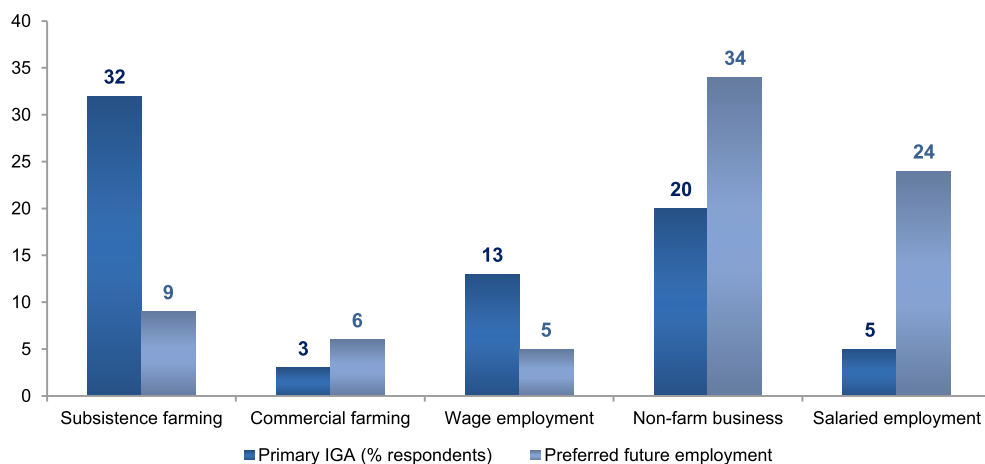
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 Development

While similar studies on aspirations are not available for the Asia-Pacific region, it can be surmised that if the agricultural sector can provide young people with significant financial remuneration, this can, in turn, improve its public perception, earning young people in the sector the respect of their peers and community.

In order to constructively engage youth in agriculture, the community and older people in the sector must recognize that youth can make a valuable contribution with new ideas and perspectives. Unfortunately, in many societies where tradition and hierarchy remain central features, it continues to be difficult for young people to provide significant input. More needs to be done to demonstrate the value of cross-generational work and what can be learned from young people.

While many organizations in agricultural development recognize the significant challenges in attracting the best and the brightest, there are few targeted initiatives for young people and even fewer that work collaboratively with different organizations in the sector on youth issues.

Figure 1. Current employment and future job aspirations of youth in Uganda



Note: IGA denotes Income Generating Activity  
Source: Banks and Sulaiman, 2012

## Mismatch between education and employment in the agricultural sector

Agriculture is changing, and with it, a revised set of skills is needed to address new challenges. As attitudes, expectations and employment in agriculture change, there is evidence that the skills and competencies of graduates do not meet the needs of today's agricultural sector (Blackie *et al*, 2009). The 'new professional' in agriculture should, for example, be better able to work across different disciplines, in partnership with different stakeholders and understand the value chain and potential for profit and entrepreneurship at different stages. The increased importance of holistic and multidisciplinary approaches requires agricultural professionals to be able to integrate knowledge and practices from outside their discipline and work within the multifunctionality of agriculture (IAASTD, 2009). As we move away from a 'business as usual' approach we must integrate this new way of thinking into educational institutions and agricultural curricula.

The broad themes that emerge from the literature point to a need for agricultural professionals with characteristics different from those that universities 'develop' at present, including soft skills, such as communication and writing as well as other non-technical skills. A Young Professionals for Agricultural Research for Development (YPARD) study examined the skills required for agricultural employment, as stated by recently graduated young agricultural professionals and employers. Rated top among these were entrepreneurship and business skills

in which, many felt they had not received adequate exposure through their education (Percy-Smith and Akkermans, 2012).

These are but a couple of identified needs of youth in the sector. More country- and discipline-specific information is required. The educational sector must have stronger links with youth and major employers in the agricultural sector. This is the only way universities and technical training schools can ensure that their curricula remain relevant to a changing sector.

## Youth in policy

There is growing agreement on the importance of bringing input from youth to policymaking processes. It is clear that young people must be part of the solution as they are facing the challenges that policies seek to address and know the future they would like for themselves. Many youth groups say: "nothing for us, without us" – a slogan used by several other interest groups to ensure they are consulted on decisions that affect them.

Different strategies have been employed for youth integration into policy development in agriculture, ranging from e-discussions to gather youth input which is then presented at meetings and events, to bringing young people to the policymakers' table and strong engagement of young people via social media. Many activities have been relatively informal, with the exception of the development of youth-focused policies where groups of young people are normally consulted.

Formalized and regular processes that bring together youth and decision makers are seen as more effective than informal and irregular consultations (Lintelo, 2011). These may include youth 'seats' in decision-making bodies and advisory groups. Youth representatives face similar challenges as those who represent other constituent groups, in that they represent the interests and concerns of all youth in agriculture, including those with different aims and interests in both urban and rural areas. Ensuring adequate representation of such a disparate group requires formal and wide-ranging consultations. This, in turn, requires significant organization and investment. A United Nations document warns that youth organizations should not go the way of many other organizations that speak on behalf of

**Dear Palawija News readers,**

Youth and agriculture has emerged as an important theme in the global development agenda amid growing concern about the declining interest among young people in engaging in agriculture. As highlighted by the High-Level Panel of Eminent Persons in its report on the Post-2015 Development Agenda, youth comprise a quarter of the world population and are shaping social and economic development while building the foundation of the future. Their engagement in agriculture is particularly important in order to infuse new ideas and innovation into the sector, even more so in the Asia-Pacific region where agriculture still provides close to 40 per cent of total employment. The current issue of Palawija thus focuses on this theme.

The research article by Courtney Paisley, Director of the global platform, Young Professionals for Agricultural Research for Development (YPARD), highlights useful perspectives and experiences in youth engagement in agriculture, including the importance of mentorship roles, value-chain opportunities, youth-focused capacity enhancement and policy development in the backdrop of an increasing youth population, high unemployment rates and continuing rural-urban migration.

The short article by Jieying Bi of the Agricultural Information Institute of the Chinese Academy of Agricultural Sciences provides an overview of youth engagement in agriculture and its emerging trends in China. The article discusses new patterns, priorities and strategies for youth participation in agriculture as well as various challenges hindering youth engagement in this sector.

A Policy Brief by the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) titled *Improving Young Rural Women's and Men's Livelihoods - The most sustainable means of moving to a brighter future*, elaborating upon IFAD work on rural youth is also reviewed. Furthermore, we share a success story on a training programme launched by the Cambodian Center for Study and Development in Agriculture (CEDAC) aimed at developing entrepreneurial skills among unemployed rural young people in Cambodia.

We hope that you will find the information in this issue useful. As always, we welcome your feedback as well as contributions to future issues of the newsletter.

certain groups instead of empowering them to speak for themselves (United Nations, 2003).

It is important that once youth get the opportunity to speak, they are well prepared to offer a substantiated opinion on the issue at hand.

A comment on the YPARD external review said: "Great, youth are getting a voice, now what do they have to say?" This confirms that we need to move beyond this ad hoc approach and ensure that youth input is provided consistently and in a manner that is usable by policymakers.

Policymakers will not sift through large amounts of information to reach the core message. In order to facilitate the uptake of their messages, young professionals require additional guidance and skills to build strong arguments. Training should be provided to youth on policy, which would cover communication with policymakers,

developing policy briefs and education on processes, including how to become engaged from the start in policy development. Training must also include guidance on evolving a cohesive message from a large group of people with different backgrounds, experiences and opinions. This is not a perfect science, but being able to communicate nuances is important.

When assessing the impact of youth engagement in policy, teasing out the appropriate information is challenging. Youth input cannot always be extracted from the outcome of a meeting, making the monitoring of youth input more difficult and the assessment of programmes designed to increase youth contribution to policymaking less clear. The indicators for impact assessment must be well developed and capture the input processes, if not measure the final degree of input.

While interest in promoting youth input in policy- and decision-making is becoming stronger, there remain weak linkages in consistently and effectively bringing young people into policy discussions and clear avenues to have these messages heard. It is difficult for youth to access high-level policy discussions and policy arenas of influence. They require help from the agricultural community and those in positions of influence. Governments must show willingness to bring about high-level and long-lasting change in this regard.

### Strategies for engaging youth

Youth are keen to belong to a community that supports their development and where they can share ideas and learn from others. Those lacking experience find it daunting to share ideas with senior professionals, but may feel more comfortable doing it with their peers. Youth networks provide freedom and space to 'try out' and obtain feedback on ideas before sharing these in the professional sphere. Both informal and formal guidance are important to support young professionals in the sector. The following are some strategies that have been employed:

#### Sharing success stories of young professionals in agriculture

Success stories of young professionals in agricultural development are gathered from the 7,000 YPARD members around the world and through partners, and disseminated through the YPARD 'Showcase'. Successful individuals are encouraged and supported to share their stories in local media to get these messages out to other youth, particularly in rural areas. As the media

does not usually provide in-depth coverage of this field, it is important that examples of successful careers in the agricultural sector are shared so that positive messages reach young people.

Social media plays a strong role in disseminating positive messages to a global audience as well as information on opportunities in the sector. The sense of community provided by social media reduces isolation and encourages exchange of ideas and experiences. The online space can provide powerful promotional and networking tools for young professionals who do not have very many opportunities for connecting with traditional networks of professionals.

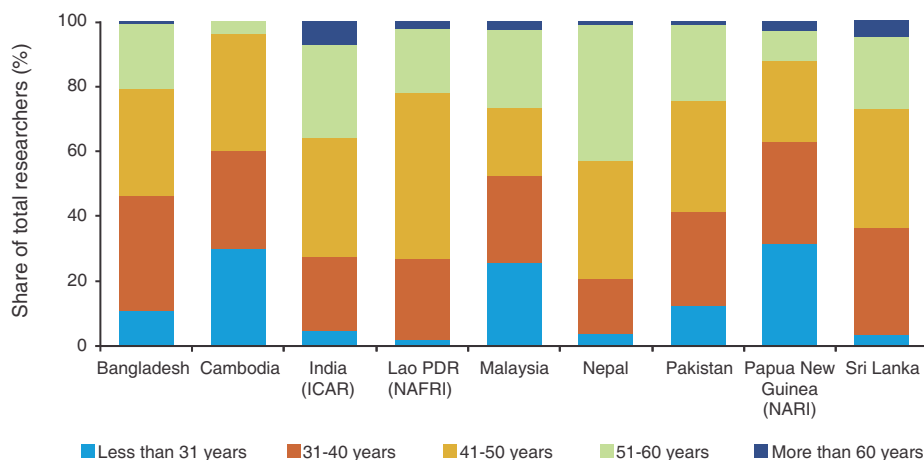
#### Mentoring

In many countries, national agricultural research institutions consist of an ageing scientific community where many staff members are close to retirement with few young professionals to carry on their work. Mentoring is critical in these institutions to pass on knowledge and skills before senior staff retire.

Within the Asia-Pacific region, there exist national research institutions with ageing senior staff as well as those with a disproportionate number of junior, inexperienced staff members. Mentoring is difficult in both cases (ASTI, 2013). Investment in staff recruitment and training is essential for both types of institutions to maintain research quality and sustainability.

Organizations use mentoring to develop the capacity of their employees, prepare staff for promotion and invest in new, inexperienced staff.

Figure 2. Age distribution of agricultural research staff, selected countries 2009/2010



Source: Asti 2013

Mentoring identifies and improves professional areas requiring development, provides access to guidance and continuous learning, and enhances productivity and teamwork. Mentoring can help to unlock the potential of young professionals and develop human capital to enable them to promote agricultural development.

A survey by YPARD of its network indicated that 93.5 per cent of its members were interested in joining a mentoring programme. It is thus something that many young people value, but few have access to. It is critical for young professionals for enhancing their skills and understanding of the sector, their confidence and the drive to excel. The broadening of horizons through mentoring enables young professionals to be more innovative and facilitates cross-disciplinary approaches.

Mentoring must be a two-way process, however, and not follow the traditional 'senior-knows-best' approach. In addition to providing a valuable mentoring role, senior professionals benefit from the new perspective on their work offered by the young professionals they mentor, including how to reach a younger and more modern audience, information on new tools and technologies as well as emerging trends and ideas. Mentoring is hence, not a one-way but a two-way transfer of knowledge.

This is better recognized in sectors other than agriculture with corporations increasingly using younger mentors to develop successful business leaders (BBC, 2014). Top leaders recognize that it is important to understand today's youth in order to reach out to them, take advantage of social media and improve their own work.

## International Year of Family Farming (IYFF)

Youth are an integral part of the family farming unit, but many rural parents in developing countries do not want their children to take up farming. Without the support of parents, it is not easy for young people to become involved in family farming and help improve it.

The 2014 IYFF focuses on working together and being receptive to new ideas and strategies from youth to improve family farm productivity. The older generation must understand that young people can bring modern practices and tools to help modernize farm business activities.

Not all parents will be open to the ideas of children, nor will all children want to take over the family farm. Nonetheless, as the youth population rises and employment prospects become more limited, rural families will need to consider the farm as part of their children's future and this is thus how this critical legacy will be passed on.

## Way forward

The development of strategies to engage young people in agricultural development must, above all, include input from young agricultural professionals themselves. Young people are best positioned to know how to reach out to their peers, what interests them, how they can best contribute and what additional support they require to do so. Approaches should include a mixture of informal and formal mechanisms and different actors should work together with a multitude of strategies combined into a comprehensive approach.

There is no doubt that national governments will need to play a key role along with other main actors in agricultural development. While many are aware of the need to bring more young people to and provide interesting opportunities in the sector, few are taking steps towards this. The time is now and the time is critical. Bring some young people together in your organization and find what they need to become leaders and innovators and take the sector forward - it is the only way to ensure the future sustainability of the sector.

*(References will be made available upon request)*

### YPARD

*Young Professionals for Agricultural Research for Development (YPARD) was established in response to the young generation's increasing lack of interest in agriculture, insufficient participation of young professionals in addressing critical development issues and inadequate access to resources to address these issues. YPARD serves as a medium for young professionals (YPs) from all stakeholder groups in agricultural development to voice their views, exchange perspectives and to contribute to sustainably improved livelihoods, worldwide, through dynamic agricultural development.*

*Only when young professionals are actively engaged in shaping the sector's future will we be able to work towards a responsible agriculture, able to meet global needs without depleting its resources.*

SHORT  
ARTICLE

# Overview of Youth Engagement in Agriculture in China and Emerging Trends

By Jieying Bi

## Introduction

Agriculture continues to be an engine of inclusive and accelerated economic growth, development as well as livelihood security in Asia and the Pacific, a region which supports 55 and 70 per cent of the world's total and agricultural population respectively, on less than one fifth of total land (APAARI & PARC, 2013). In this region, there is a rising trend of rural youth moving away from agriculture, and the same is true in China. With accelerating urbanization and industrialization, more and more of rural labour is migrating to urban areas. According to the annual statistics from the National Bureau of Statistics of China (2014), 268.9 million rural labourers, or 35.0 per cent of the total employed labour force, migrated to urban areas in 2013, and about 60 per cent of the migrants were less than 40 years old. Most of those staying back in agriculture are the '386199 Troops'<sup>1</sup>. A survey (Zhu Qizhen, 2011) in 10 provinces of China revealed that the average age of farmers was 57 in 2010, while another survey asking "who will plant in the next 10 years in your family?" found that almost none of the parents interviewed expect their children to be engaged in farming. The Minister of Agriculture of China, Dr. Han Changfu, has indicated "Most of those who migrate to cities are youth, 84.5 per cent have never been engaged in farming activities, and 93.6 per cent want to live in cities." The question "Who will plant the land?" thus becomes a pertinent and challenging one for national food security, even though China has achieved increases in grain production over 10 consecutive years.

## China's agriculture in transition

China sustains 20 per cent of the world's population with only 9 per cent of arable land. With the help of continuous increases in

investment in agriculture, the national food security strategy, policy support in 'No.1 central document'- the central Government's annual first policy document, efficient rural institutional reform, and progress in science and technology, China has made great achievements in promoting comprehensive food production capacity and ensuring national food security. Its grain production reached 601.9 million tons in 2013 with an average 3.6 per cent annual increase since 2004. In addition, rural households' per capita net income reached 8,896 CNY (USD 1,446<sup>2</sup>) in 2013 with over 10 per cent annual growth since 2010. In the backdrop of these achievements, several new features and trends are emerging nowadays in the process of development and modernization of agriculture in China as outlined below.

## Mechanization

In China, the level of mechanized land preparation, planting and harvesting reached 59 per cent in 2013. Considering the growing labour cost, the government plans to further subsidize farm machine purchase and quality improvements for farm machines. It is predicted that the level of mechanization will reach 61 per cent in 2014 and agriculture will become an even more machine and technology intensive sector in future.

## Land transfer and large scale production

With the progress of mechanization and the migration of rural labour, land transfer and consolidation is promoted and new producer organizations are booming. The 17th National Congress of the Communist Party of China (CPC) in 2007 proposed improving the market for land transfers and keeping an optimum scale for farming. Subsequently, the 18th National Congress of CPC encouraged development of various large scale agribusinesses and



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<sup>1</sup> '38' stands for women, '61' for children and '99' for the old. [http://baike.baidu.com/link?url=4u-CF7wZl7gzu1A5pkTvbG-faBYqTleWYp3Dw\\_90\\_d3RC2bhCCsUvlytl2rx0QlvGRuSSxMp-aKMmww4Qr1EIK](http://baike.baidu.com/link?url=4u-CF7wZl7gzu1A5pkTvbG-faBYqTleWYp3Dw_90_d3RC2bhCCsUvlytl2rx0QlvGRuSSxMp-aKMmww4Qr1EIK)

<sup>2</sup> At 2013 exchange rate of 1 USD = 6.152 CNY

establishment of a new intensive, specialized, organized and socialized agribusiness system. Farmer Cooperatives, large scale farming, family farming, agricultural entrepreneurship, etc. are booming rapidly. Besides this, China as the world's no.1 producer of meat and poultry will continue to see large scale and standardized livestock and dairy production.

### **Market oriented production and industrialization**

Driven by increasing labour, land and other input costs, together with increasing demand for safe and high quality food, both the government and private sector are accelerating the transition from traditional agriculture to market oriented agriculture integrated with domestic and international markets. Also, the food processing industry is growing very rapidly, food transportation is becoming quicker because of the development of better logistic systems, and food supply and value chains are becoming more efficient.

### **Multifunctional agriculture**

Urban agriculture reflects the multifunctional dimension of agriculture including elements such as hydroponics horticulture for eco-friendly offices and home gardening. Life styles are set to change in urban and peri-urban environments, with direct supply of 'organic' vegetables from the city for the city. Production, marketing, and distribution will be integrated and developed as part of a consolidated supply and value chain. Quality standards and branded production and processing will also attract more attention.

### **E-agriculture and new extension systems**

The application of new information and communication technology has the potential to empower farmers and production cooperatives to access technical and market information. 3G-based extension information systems can enhance self-learning for extension agents as well as their information and knowledge base, and provide answers for farmers' questions.

The above trends and features are making agriculture a more market-oriented, technology- and capital-intensive, large scale, integrated, multifunctional and creative sector that is more attractive for innovative youth.

## **New patterns for youth participation in agriculture**

### **Renewed interest in rural areas**

In spite of the current rural-urban migration trends, more and more talented young people who are good at farming and who earn their first fortunes in the cities are shifting their focus to agriculture and going back to rural areas. The Ministry of Agriculture has issued new supporting policies in 2011, such as offers of loans and tax benefits, to facilitate youth to go back to their hometowns to start agriculture-based businesses. Training programmes on practical farming skills and farm management are also provided.

### **Specialized production and modern logistics**

An interesting example is that of Mr. Chen Sheng who graduated from Peking University, and gave up his job as a government officer to build a company to raise pigs. Now his chain has over 700 shops in Guangzhou, Beijing, Shanghai and other cities. The market valuation for his company reached over 4 billion CNY (633 million USD<sup>3</sup>) in 2012. He epitomizes those youth who have foresight in agriculture-based businesses as well as strong managerial capacity. Many more well-educated graduates are similarly engaged in specialized businesses in the areas of agricultural production or related logistics fields.

### **Eco-friendly agriculture and tourism**

Most poor villages in rural China remain less developed because of adverse natural conditions, especially in mountain areas. Low grain productivity and poor transportation results in low income. However, in the eyes of innovative youth, this disadvantage can be turned into an advantage. Orchards can produce various kinds of organically grown fruits and vegetables. Local farmers can also be involved and can share the added value of eco-friendly agriculture. Besides this, the unpolluted natural environment becomes an asset and a means of generating additional profit through tourism.

### **Community Support Agriculture**

Community Support Agriculture (CSA), as a kind of suburban or urban agriculture, provides a participatory model for people to experience the production, processing and selling of agricultural commodities. This model enriches agricultural education and research and makes agriculture more like a tertiary sector. Students of agriculture

<sup>3</sup> At 2013 exchange rate of 1 USD = 6.310 CNY

and young researchers have shown great interest in developing CSA in urban China.

The above discussion shows bright prospects for youth engagement in agriculture in China. However, this is just a small part of the bigger picture. There are various challenges for agricultural development as well as specific barriers for youth to engage in agriculture.

### Constraints hindering youth engagement in agriculture

The predominance of smallholder farming and the ageing farming labour force are a hindrance to the trend towards integrated, large scale agriculture in China. Farmers lack the ability to resist risks (both natural and market risks) and shocks, while limited application of technological innovation and the low rate of technology transfer constrain the development of modern agriculture, thus continuing to keep agriculture unattractive for youth. Besides, there are some other specific barriers to active engagement of youth in agriculture. Firstly, agriculture in future will be market oriented which calls for agribusiness management capacity and entrepreneurship but current policy initiatives are far from enough and social mindsets need to change for guiding and supporting new businesses. Existing education and training opportunities are also not able to fully equip the youth to meet the intensive technical requirements for modern agriculture. Secondly, current land policy and lack of financial support are constraining growth of modern, large scale agricultural production. While there are some specific incentives offered for youth to return to rural areas and undertake modern modes of agriculture, compared with the risks involved, these incentives are quite limited. Thirdly, the generally low income levels in traditional small scale farming compared to other sectors and unfavourable notions about agriculture related careers result in lack of interest amongst youth in agricultural farming and research. Finally, uncomfortable living conditions in rural areas tend to make youth prefer to live in cities.

### Priorities and strategies for enhancing youth engagement in agriculture

Four major steps are suggested for facilitating the participation of youth in agriculture in China.

Firstly, **national foresight** and a vision for modern agriculture are urgently needed. Among

the reasons that youth do not want to work in the agriculture sector is the image of agriculture linked to hard on-farm work under difficult conditions. To attract youth, a clear roadmap for modern agriculture is very much required. In the process for developing such a roadmap, wide consultations with various stakeholders including NGOs and especially marginalized farmers are needed. Most importantly, innovative perspectives contributed by youth should be given high priority.

Secondly, based on the national vision, a **clear strategy** needs to be then evolved. The government should take the lead in this and develop guidelines or a five-year plan for youth to engage in agriculture. This should be a joint effort. All related ministries, including the National Development and Reform Commission (NDRC), Ministry of Agriculture (MOA), Ministry of Education (MOE), Ministry of Finance (MOF), Ministry of Commerce (MOC), and Ministry of Human Resources and Social Security (MOHRSS) should join hands with youth associations to work on this strategy.

Thirdly, an **effective mechanism** is needed at the operational level. Ministries should work together to put in place an efficient support system. The mechanism can be as follows: MOA and Ministry of Science and Technology (MOST) can work on training and extension for farmers; MOE can work on agricultural education; MOC and the Financial System should take the responsibility for effective financial support, especially for credit and agricultural insurance; MOA and MOHRSS on the other hand can work on attaining a balance between urbanization and emergence of the 'new countryside', especially with respect to rural development and provision of a social safety net system.

Finally, a **broad based advocacy network** needs to be established. Various kinds of media platforms, awards and competitions for youth in agricultural research and development, compilation of success stories, conferences, and other channels can be leveraged to advocate in favour of modern agriculture. Policies which encourage the development of modern agriculture and youth participation in agriculture, and promote sharing of experiences internationally can be widely promoted to establish a conducive social atmosphere for youth participation in agriculture.

*(References will be made available upon request)*



# Improving Young Rural Women's and Men's Livelihoods - The most sustainable means of moving to a brighter future

International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), 2013

PAPER  
REVIEW

**G**lobal agriculture needs to meet an estimated 60 per cent increase in demand for food by 2050 while addressing the challenges presented by climate change and natural resource degradation. Given these realities, it is clear that it is imperative to invest in the next generation of farmers. Young rural people can be key players driving rural transformation and combating poverty. However, rural communities are not benefiting fully from the transformational potential of youth: The absence of decent work opportunities in rural areas is one of the reasons young rural women and men are migrating to urban areas at an unprecedented level. As the dynamics of rural life change, there is a pressing need to create opportunities for young people to contribute to their communities and have decent livelihoods in the agricultural and non-farm sectors.

IFAD recognizes that in many developing countries young people comprise a large proportion of the rural population. IFAD commitment to enabling the rural poor to overcome poverty is, therefore, highly dependent on finding ways for young women and men in

rural areas to harness their untapped productive capacity and energy (United Nations, 2013).

This policy brief gives an overview of IFAD work on rural youth livelihood issues. It summarizes important facts regarding rural youth and presents key arguments for making investment in young rural women and men a priority. It also discusses relevant challenges and issues as well as policy approaches to improving rural youth livelihoods.

Text boxes highlight IFAD-supported programmes such as the youth-led platform, Global Youth Innovation Network, which aims to channel the passion of rural youth to inspire change and transform their communities; Junior Farmer Field and Life Schools; and initiatives to promote rural finance and entrepreneurship. Additional sources of information and examples of good practices related to rural youth livelihood issues are listed at the end of the paper.

Link to the full document:  
[http://www.ifad.org/pub/ruralyouth/youth\\_policybrief.pdf](http://www.ifad.org/pub/ruralyouth/youth_policybrief.pdf)



## NEWS AND ACTIVITIES

### Workshop on Technology Transfer for Sustainable Agriculture



CAPSA organized the 'Workshop on Technology Transfer for Sustainable Agriculture' from 28 April to 2 May 2014 in Bogor, Indonesia, in partnership with the Indonesian Agency for Agricultural Research and Development (IAARD), Ministry of Agriculture of Indonesia and AVRDC – The World Vegetable Center. The objective of the workshop was to support regional food security by strengthening national capacities for transfer of agricultural technologies that are sustainable, productivity-enhancing, suitable for resource-poor farmers and gender-sensitive.

The participants included officials from Indonesia as well as Lao People's Democratic Republic, Myanmar, the Philippines and Timor-Leste, representing ministries of agriculture and related government institutions working on agricultural policy and extension.

Experts from international organizations, government institutions, the private sector as well as civil society organizations from Indonesia and other countries, shared expertise and experience in order to optimize the learning for participants. A field visit was also organized to provide practical exposure to sustainable agriculture technologies.

The training was conducted as part of CAPSA's capacity-building programme on sustainable agriculture and complemented outreach activities organized under the SATNET Asia ([www.satnetasia.org](http://www.satnetasia.org)) Knowledge Network facilitated by CAPSA and funded by the European Union. In their feedback, participants expressed strong appreciation for the resource persons and the workshop content and conveyed their plans to apply and share the knowledge gained.

### Natural Resource Use and Environmental Impact of Food Systems in South-East Asia



#### International Resource Panel

The International Resource Panel (IRP) is a science-policy platform created by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) to provide decision makers and other stakeholders with independent scientific assessments of the use of natural resources and the related environmental impact.

The IRP has now included food as a strategic priority area in its work. The Food Working Group of IRP examines the impact of global food systems on natural resource use and the

environment, and aims to identify opportunities to improve the efficiency of resource use to steer the transition towards more sustainable food systems and enhanced food security.

A global study on food systems and natural resources is being conducted as part of this work. Head of CAPSA, Dr. Katinka Weinberger contributed to the process with a presentation on the socioeconomic drivers of the South-East Asian food system and its expected evolution, made at the 'Natural Resource Use and

Environmental Impacts of Food Systems in South-East Asia' workshop held in Jakarta, Indonesia on 30 April-1 May 2014. Her presentation highlighted that South-East Asia had been remarkably successful over the past 50 years in using its food and agricultural resources as a base for pro-poor growth, resulting in rapid emergence from hunger and poverty for many households in the region. South-East Asia has benefited from its very dynamic agricultural sector with total and per capita farm production

increasing since the 1960s. Urbanization, another key feature of this region, has contributed to demand and supply-side impacts, such as demand for diversified and high-quality food, and the creation of service clusters close to cities, while farming is characterized by increasing mechanization and higher farm wages. These dynamic changes have given rise to many questions regarding resource use efficiency, and the steps needed to steer the transition towards sustainable food systems.

## Promoting Food Security and Tackling Undernutrition in the Post-Millennium Development Goals Era

The number of undernourished people in the Asia-Pacific region has declined from over 750 million in 1990-1992 to around 550 million in 2011-2013. Over the same period, the incidence of undernourishment has come down from 24 to 13 per cent even though the region's population grew by 950 million. While this is a remarkable achievement, two out of every three undernourished people in the world still live in the region and malnutrition among children under five is as high as 40 per cent in some countries. There is hence, a genuine need for dialogue among all stakeholders to identify policies for removing constraints to achieving food and nutrition security as part of the post-Millennium Development Goals agenda.

The above was highlighted by Dr. Upali Wickramasinghe, CAPSA Regional Adviser on Poverty Reduction at the international symposium, 'Human Development in Global South: Emerging perspectives in the era of post-Millennium Development Goals', organized on 28-29 April 2014 in New Delhi, India. His contribution to this broad discourse focused on the key elements that need attention for promoting food and nutrition security in the Asia-Pacific region and the associated constraints. While food production has increased substantially over the past decades, there are signs that it has reached a plateau, calling for a new and sustainable food production revolution. The Asia-Pacific region must urgently address both the causes of food and nutrition insecurity, namely, inadequate food supply and unequal food and income distribution. Apart from this, structural transformation in agriculture remains incomplete, resulting in weak



integration of agriculture with the industrial and services sectors and markets. A prominent feature of the sector is the dominance of smallholder agriculture characterized by small land parcels, rudimentary production technologies, weak or non-existent access to extension services and unorganized labour institutions. Agricultural transformation enabling smallholders' capacity to generate surplus must therefore be promoted.

The policy priorities underscored by Dr. Wickramasinghe included planning measures for sustainable food security based on agro-climatological zones in order to cope with the impact of climate change on the largely monsoon-dependent agricultural production in the region. Moreover, given that nutrition-sensitive approaches to agriculture have, in general failed as markets are poor transmitters of the nutritional value of food, it is necessary to complement agricultural development policy with consumer education.

## SUCCESS STORY

# Training Rural Youth in Cambodia to Start Their Own Farm Business: A success story



**T**he Young Agri-Entrepreneurs (YAE) is a training programme launched by the Cambodian Center for Study and Development in Agriculture (CEDAC) aimed at developing entrepreneurial skills among unemployed rural young people in Cambodia. The YAE programme provides capacity-building support to rural youth who have completed 12th grade education but cannot afford higher education. Most participants are jobless and eager to start their own agricultural business. Since 2007, the YAE programme has provided vocational training to 500 rural youth, 217 of them women. According to CEDAC President Dr. Yang Saing Koma, the Center plans to expand the programme over the next 10 years to train another 10,000 rural young people to become dynamic catalysts of agricultural and rural development in the country.

Three fresh YAE graduates have started an organic farm business in Takeo province after completing the over six-month YAE course which equipped them with theoretical and practical knowledge, including learning with farmers in the field. These young graduates became very interested in agriculture and decided to collectively invest in their own organic farm business. Their farm is located in Dakpo village of Beungtranh Khangtbong commune in Tramkok district of the province.

One of the graduates, 26-year-old Sry Tola, speaks proudly of their initiative: "I see a huge opportunity in the organic farm business." Particularly, since most people are not interested in this business and there is a growing market demand for organic products, he says. Mr. Tola and his two friends are working on 2 hectares of his 10-hectare farmland. With technical and financial assistance from CEDAC, they are planting multipurpose trees including moringa, neem and kassod to sell through CEDAC SAHAKREAS shops (enterprise shops).

"We could earn \$3,000 to \$7,000 per month from our organic farm," says Mr. Tola. They are happy with the work because the business will also help provide jobs to local people. Moreover, they will



supply healthier food to consumers. "Hopefully, the social economy will also be improved by reducing the amount of imported products from neighboring countries." Mr. Tola is grateful to CEDAC for providing him with the opportunity to realize his dream of becoming a successful organic farm business professional. He encourages rural youth to participate in any available training programme and to spend more time learning from farmers.

*Source: Cambodian Center for Study and Development in Agriculture (CEDAC)*

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