



Youth and Food System

Why in News

A new **UN report on youth and agriculture** underscores the urgent need to make agri-food systems more appealing to young people to secure the future of global food security and nutrition.

- The report '**Promoting youth engagement and employment in agriculture and food systems**' is prepared and shared to the UN by the [Committee on World Food Security \(CFS\)](#).
- **CFS** is an inclusive international and intergovernmental platform for all stakeholders to work together on **food security and nutrition for all**. The CFS is hosted by the [Food and Agriculture Organization \(FAO\)](#) of the [United Nations](#) (UN).

Key Points

▪ Youth in Numbers:

- Youth aged between 15 and 24 years accounted for **16% of the world's population** in 2019.
- Young people were concentrated in **Asia, Central and Southern Asia** with 361 million youth and Eastern and South-Eastern Asia with 307 million youth, followed by sub-Saharan Africa (211 million youth).
- The [International Labour Organization \(ILO\)](#) estimated that 440 million youth from the African continent would enter the labour market between 2015 and 2030.

▪ Key Findings:

- **Food systems are the largest employer:** Particularly in the developing countries, yet they often do not provide decent and meaningful work or adequate livelihood opportunities, nor maintain a balance between the needs and rights of different generations.
 - **Food systems** are a **complex web of activities** involving production, processing, handling, preparation, storage, distribution, marketing, access, purchase, consumption, food loss and waste, as well as the outputs of these activities, including social, economic and environmental outcomes.
- **More Employment Opportunities:** [Covid-19](#) has affected labour markets around the world, hurting employment prospects for the youth more than those belonging to other age groups. Globally, employment among the youth fell 8.7% in 2020 compared with 3.7% for adults.
 - Agri-food systems, if made more appealing and equitable to youth, are a large, **untapped reservoir of employment opportunities**.
- **Importance of Focusing on Developing Countries:** As almost 88% of the world's 1.2 billion youth live, particularly in Africa, where over 70% of youth subsist on USD 2 per day or less.
- **Achieving Sustainable Development Goals:** The youth engagement and employment in sustainable agri-food systems is simultaneously a goal to be realized and a means for the achievement of the [Sustainable Development Goals](#), and of economic well-being.

- Youth are on the **front lines to build the food systems of the future**, while also bearing significant risks from **climate change, social and economic inequities**, and **political marginalization**.

▪ Recommendations:

- **Approaches, initiatives and policies** to strengthen youth engagement and employment in food systems need to be based on the **pillars of rights, equity, agency and recognition**.
- Improving youth-focused **social protection programmes, labour laws** and regulations, and **young people's access to resources** (land, forests, fisheries etc), finance, markets, digital technologies, knowledge and information.
- Supporting youth-led **start-up initiatives** is also important, and requires a supportive policy environment.
- The **redistribution of resources, knowledge and opportunities for youth** can contribute to creating jobs for the youth, as well as directly supporting transitions to sustainable agri-food systems.

Indian Scenario

▪ Youth in Numbers:

- The youth (18-29 years) constitute 22% of India's population, which is more than 261 million people.
- According to the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation, the median age of Indian population is around 28 years in 2021 and will become 31 years by 2031.
- India is also going through the stage of **demographic dividend**.
- Hardly **5% of the youth are engaged in agriculture** though over 60% of the rural people derive their livelihood fully or partly from farming and its related activities.
 - Clearly, the modern youth are disenchanted with agriculture and are shunning it as a profession.

▪ Related Initiatives:

- **MAYA Roadmap, 2018:** This was formulated in a conference in New Delhi on **"Motivating and Attracting Youth in Agriculture" (MAYA)**.
 - The MAYA road map envisages offering the youth a variety of avenues and opportunities for economic growth, social respect and application of modern technologies in farming and allied activities.
- **ARYA (Attracting and Retaining Youth in Agriculture):** [Indian Council of Agricultural Research \(ICAR\)](#) has initiated this programme. Following are its **Objectives:**
 - To attract and empower the Youth in Rural Areas to take up various Agriculture, allied and service sectors.
 - To enable the **Farm Youth to establish network groups** to take up resource and capital intensive activities like processing, value addition and marketing.
- **National Policy for Farmers, 2007:** To introduce measures which can help attract and retain youths in farming and processing of farm products for higher value addition by making it intellectually stimulating and economically rewarding.

Source: DTE