

Empowering the Future

Posted at: 14/07/2025

Empowering the Future: Role of Youth in Transforming Agriculture

Context

The **Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO)** recently published a report titled “**The Status of Youth in Agrifood Systems**”. The report underscores the pivotal role of youth in transforming agrifood systems and highlights the current participation status, challenges faced, and future potential of youth engagement in agriculture globally.

Who are Youth and What are Agrifood Systems?

- **Youth:** As per FAO, youth are individuals aged between **15 to 24 years**.
 - **Agrifood Systems:** These systems include all stages of the food chain — **production, processing, distribution, and consumption** — along with associated **economic, social, and environmental impacts**.
-

Current Status of Youth in Agrifood Systems

- Globally, there are around **1.3 billion youth (15-24 years)**, with **85%** residing in **low and lower-middle-income countries**, where agrifood systems are key livelihood options.
- **Food insecurity** among youth has increased from **16.7% (2014-16)** to **24.4% (2021-23)**, with the highest impact seen in **Africa**.
- Over **20%** of global youth are **Not in Employment, Education, or Training (NEET)**; **young women are twice as likely** to be NEET compared to men.

- The **share of youth working in agrifood systems declined** from **54% in 2005** to **44% in 2021**.
 - In **industrial agrifood systems**, **rural youth account for just 5%** of the population — raising concerns of future **labour shortages**.
 - Currently, **44% of working youth** are engaged in agrifood systems, compared to **38% of working adults**.
-

Challenges in Youth Participation

- **Landlessness:** Lack of land ownership or small fragmented holdings discourage youth from farming.
 - **Social Stigma:** Agriculture is often viewed as a low-status occupation.
 - **Migration:** Youth prefer urban migration for better career prospects and income opportunities.
 - **Urban Demographics:** **54% of global youth live in urban areas**, especially in **East Asia**, limiting rural agricultural workforce.
 - **Access Barriers:**
 - Inadequate access to **resources, finance, extension services, technology, and innovation**.
 - **Lack of Human Capital:**
 - Gaps in **education, career guidance, employable skills, and mentorship**.
 - **Financial Constraints:**
 - Difficulty accessing **credit** and **high input costs** hinder agricultural entrepreneurship.
-

How to Encourage Youth Participation in Agrifood Systems

- **Awareness of Modern Agriculture:**

- Promote **experiential learning** and exposure to **agri-business models, modern crop practices, and value chains**.

- **Youth-Specific Schemes:**

- Provide **training, land access, and credit** support.
- *Example: ATMA Cafeteria* under the **Agricultural Technology Management Agency (ATMA)** offers **200+ hours** of skill training for rural youth.

- **Agripreneurship Promotion:**

- Facilitate youth access to **finance and markets**; encourage them to become **agripreneurs**.

- **ICT Integration and Market Development:**

- Use **digital tools** to provide real-time market and product information.

- **Value Addition:**

- Encourage **primary processing** (e.g., cleaning, packaging) to improve **income and employment**.

- **Policy Backing:**

- Institutions like **NITI Aayog** and **Ministry of Agriculture** should integrate **youth priorities** in agricultural policies.
 - *Example: "Sun-rise agriculture enterprises"* are proposed to attract and retain youth in farming.
-

Government Measures in India

- **Agri-Clinics and Agri-Business Centres (2002):**

- Provides **training and subsidies** to agricultural graduates to start businesses.

- **National Institute of Agricultural Extension Management (MANAGE):**

- Offers training for establishing **agri-allied ventures**.

- **Skill Training of Rural Youth (STRY):**

- Offers **skill-based training** in agriculture and allied sectors at district/state level.

- **Sub Mission on Agricultural Mechanization (SMAM):**

- Promotes **farm mechanization**, custom hiring centers, and machinery banks.

- **RKVY-RAFTAAR:**

- Strengthens **agri-infrastructure** and promotes **agripreneurship ecosystems**.

- **Certified Farm and Livestock Advisor Programmes:**

- Develops specialists in **crops and livestock advisory services**.

- **Skill Development Programmes:**

- Offers **employability training** through short-term and long-term courses across rural and urban India.

- **Project ARYA (Attracting and Retaining Youth in Agriculture):**

- Aims to **engage rural youth in agricultural activities and rural entrepreneurship**.
-

Benefits of Youth Inclusion in Agrifood Systems

- **Innovation and Climate Resilience:**

- Youth bring **creativity**, are more willing to adopt **new technologies**, and adapt faster to **climate challenges**.

- **Unlocking Economic Potential:**

- Many youth live in regions with **high agricultural productivity**, creating room for **investment in infrastructure and markets**.

- **Addressing Labour Shortage:**

- Youth can fill the gap left by an **ageing farming population**.

- **Tech Adaptability:**

- Youth are more proficient with **digital tools**, e.g., **weather apps**, **e-commerce**, and **smart farming solutions**.

- **Social Networking and Mobilization:**

- Youth help in **disseminating information** and mobilizing **collective community action**.

Way Forward

- **Data-Driven Policymaking:**

- Invest in research to design **youth-centric policies** in agriculture.

- **Expand Digital Literacy and Access:**

- Ensure **digital connectivity** to connect youth with agriculture tech and markets.

- **Career Flexibility:**

- Develop mechanisms for **career re-entry** to bring youth back into agrifood systems.

- **Integrated Approach:**

- Align education, finance, infrastructure, and **policy support** to create sustainable engagement.



AKKA IAS ACADEMY
www.akkaias.com