



## Youth and Food System

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### Why in News

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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

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- **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

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- **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**