

YOUTH STATEMENT

Youth perspectives on global multistakeholder partnerships: A Bioeconomy lens





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The Bioeconomy as a systems lever

The bioeconomy is a rapidly evolving space where innovation meets ecological stewardship. Multidisciplinary in nature, it sits at the intersection of climate action, food security and sustainable livelihoods. While there is no universally agreed definition, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) references the definition developed in the Global Bioeconomy Summit (GBS) 2020, which describes the bioeconomy as “the production, utilization, conservation and regeneration of biological resources, including related knowledge, science, technology and innovation, to provide sustainable solutions (information, products, processes and services) within and across all economic sectors and enable a transformation to a sustainable economy”.

For youth, the bioeconomy is relevant beyond research and innovation; it is a platform for reimagining regenerative development. Whether developing biodegradable packaging from cassava starch, regenerating soil through agroecology or building digital platforms to improve smallholder market access, young people are already innovating, farming, researching and advocating to shape the future of agrifood systems, energy transitions and circular economies.

Across global forums, summits and strategy sessions, one priority continues to echo with urgency: collaboration. Multistakeholder partnerships (MSPs), in the form of strategic alliances, taskforces or open innovation platforms, are hailed as essential for tackling challenges such as climate change, biodiversity loss, inequality and food insecurity. Convened by international organizations, governments, corporations, civil society and academia, MSPs are designed to pool resources, align strategies, build cross-sector linkages and accelerate progress.

Yet beneath this collaborative ideal lies a deeper tension: who shapes the agenda, and who is held accountable? Research shows that many MSPs often replicate power imbalances, with youth voices largely absent. As a result, many young people question whether such partnerships, as currently designed, are truly sustainable or merely short-term deliverables that fail to create lasting impact.



Towards a youth-inclusive bioeconomy partnership

The Global Bioeconomy Summit 2024 was one of the few spaces fostering intergenerational dialogue on bioeconomy, aligning youth visions with international policy. Building on this, young leaders worldwide are not just observing these dynamics; they are actively engaging. With support from the FAO Office of Climate Change and Biodiversity, the World Food Forum (WFF) Youth Assembly convened a global consultation on the development of an MSP for the bioeconomy. More than 150 participants from diverse regions called for greater inclusivity, transparency and 12 accountability, demands grounded in their lived experiences of exclusion, tokenism and structural barriers.

For youth, the key issue is not simply how partnerships are formed, but whose priorities they serve. To unlock the full potential of the bioeconomy, partnerships must reflect the values, expertise and visions of the next generation. Youth propose that meaningful collaboration be:

Redistributive: shifting power and resources through co-designing programmes, co-authoring strategies and co-owning outcomes; **Relational:** built on trust, reciprocity and long-term engagement rather than extractive consultation; **Responsive:** adaptable to emerging youth priorities, technologies and cultural or local contexts.

To operationalize these principles, youth recommend:

- Expanding awareness and education on the bioeconomy across regions, through schools, universities, vocational training and digital advocacy.
- Building trust and inclusive governance structures, especially for marginalized groups, with transparent funding and decision-making processes.
- Addressing training gaps via targeted skills development and technical support.
- Increasing access to resources and funding by reducing bureaucratic barriers and offering accessible grants, loans and investments.
- Promoting Indigenous and local knowledge by recognizing and integrating traditional ecological wisdom.
- Fostering cross-sector collaboration and regional peer learning through networking spaces.

As global leaders continue to shape bioeconomy strategies, youth perspectives must become foundational, not supplementary. The bioeconomy offers a unique opportunity to align innovation with sustainability, but only if partnerships are inclusive, accountable, transparent and future facing.

