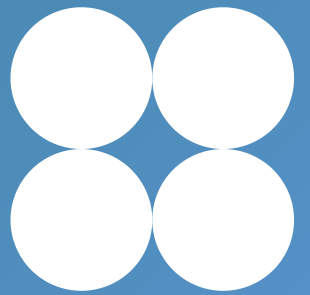


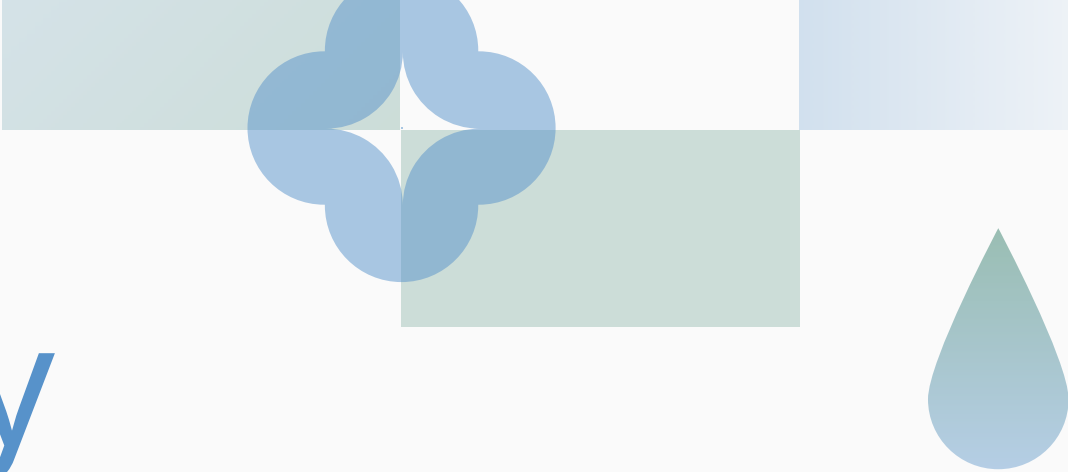


WORLD
FOOD
FORUM

GLOBAL
YOUTH
ACTION

Agrifood Leadership Education Programme on Water Action: Impact in Motion





Why Water Action?

Agrifood systems are at the heart of some of the most pressing challenges of our time. As climate change intensifies, natural disasters become more frequent, with persisting consequences for food security. In 2023, as many as 757 million people experienced hunger worldwide (FAO, 2024). The pressure on the resources that sustain food production continues to grow. Among these resources, water is a central pillar of agrifood systems and essential for achieving food security.

Agriculture already accounts for about 72 percent of global freshwater withdrawals and the world will need to produce 50 percent more food by 2050 than in 2012 to meet the needs of a growing population. Droughts, water scarcity, floods, pollution and increasing pressures on water resources are reshaping how food can be produced and putting livelihoods and food security at risk. The challenge is therefore not only to produce more, but to do so while managing water more sustainably.

At the same time, fewer young people are choosing careers in agrifood systems and more are leaving rural areas, where much of agriculture happens. This sectoral and geographic departure jeopardizes the intergenerational transfer of valuable inherited knowledge. It also reveals a failure to include, retain and leverage youth creativity and innovation at a moment when it is most needed. Young people have an essential role in shaping how agrifood systems respond and evolve to water-related challenges. By bringing their ideas, perspectives and leadership, they can drive the development of new solutions. In order to empower this impact, it is essential that young people also develop the technical skills and knowledge needed to support and advance the sustainable management of our water resources.

Recognizing this potential, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) launched the Agrifood Leadership Education Programme (ALEP) on Water Action. ALEP is a joint effort between the Land and Water Division (NSL) and Office of Youth and Women (OYW) to equip young professionals at FAO with the knowledge, skills and connections to turn learning into action. By focusing on capacity development, the programme holistically prepares young people to make strong contributions to integrated water resources management (IWRM) and the transformation of agrifood systems.

ALEP Water Action at a glance

20

**YOUNG FAO PROFESSIONALS ENGAGED
AS ALEP PARTICIPANTS**

3

**TECHNICAL
MASTERCLASSES**

2

**LEADERSHIP AND
PEDAGOGICAL
MASTERCLASSES**

5

**LEARNING
REFLECTIONS**

17

**PROJECT PROPOSALS
DEVELOPED**

550+

**YOUNG PEOPLE
REACHED
THROUGH
OPEN
SESSIONS**

100+

CERTIFICATES ISSUED

17

**FAO EXPERTS
ENGAGED AS
MENTORS**

17

**WFF NATIONAL
CHAPTERS
TRAINED**

6

**6 YOUTH
CHAMPIONS
RECOGNIZED**

Opening knowledge beyond the cohort

A programme focused on water resources and designed for young FAO professionals became a learning opportunity for hundreds of young people worldwide through a series of technical masterclasses open to the broader World Food Forum (WFF) youth network. WFF Youth National Chapters also took part through dedicated training sessions.

Technical masterclasses

SESSION 1

Seeing water clearly: Geospatial insights for agrifood water action

Topic: Discovering how maps, satellite data and geospatial thinking can help diagnose water challenges, assess risks and turn spatial evidence into informed action across agrifood systems.

Speakers:

- Livia Peiser, Senior Land and Water Officer, FAO
- Rashed Jalal, Remote Sensing Expert, FAO

161 PARTICIPANTS

53 COUNTRIES

SESSION 2

Integrated water resources management in agriculture

Topic: Exploring how integrated water management and innovative solutions, from saline agriculture to drought-resilient crops, can strengthen the resilience and sustainability of agrifood systems.

Speakers:

- Ruhiza Boroto, Senior Land and Water Officer, FAO
- Maria Konyushkova, Consultant in Sustainable Soil Management, FAO
- Felistas Mugariri, Water Crops and Nutrition Analyst, FAO

233 PARTICIPANTS

64 COUNTRIES

Technical masterclasses

SESSION 3

Elements for the responsible governance of water tenure

Topic: Understanding responsible water governance and how young people can contribute their perspectives to FAO's Global Dialogue on Water Tenure, helping shape more inclusive, equitable and resilient approaches to water governance.

Speakers:

- Benjamin Kiersch, Senior Water Resources Specialist, FAO
- Stephen Hodgson, International environmental lawyer
- Alina Mubashir, WFF Youth Policy Board member and participant in ALEP on Young Women's Empowerment
- Manal Bidar, WFF Youth Policy Board member and participant in ALEP on Young Women's Empowerment

301 PARTICIPANTS

83 COUNTRIES

Across all sections

557

participants beyond
the ALEP cohort
joined the technical
masterclasses

96

countries
represented

+100

certificates
issued



Pedagogical masterclasses

Alongside the technical masterclasses, participants took part in two pedagogical skills sessions delivered by experts from the Global Teach Ag Network, Pennsylvania State University and Mississippi State University. The sessions equipped participants with pedagogical tools to adapt and communicate technical knowledge on water to different audiences and contexts, underscoring the importance of teaching as a core leadership skill. Moreover, the action-oriented training of the sessions empowered participants to move effective teaching principles to concrete action, designing and peer-reviewing their own IWRM learning sessions. Ultimately, the sessions aimed to equip participants not only with more knowledge on water challenges and with stronger leadership skills, but to multiply this knowledge and mobilize their new skills by engaging young people and communities beyond the ALEP cohort.

SESSION 1

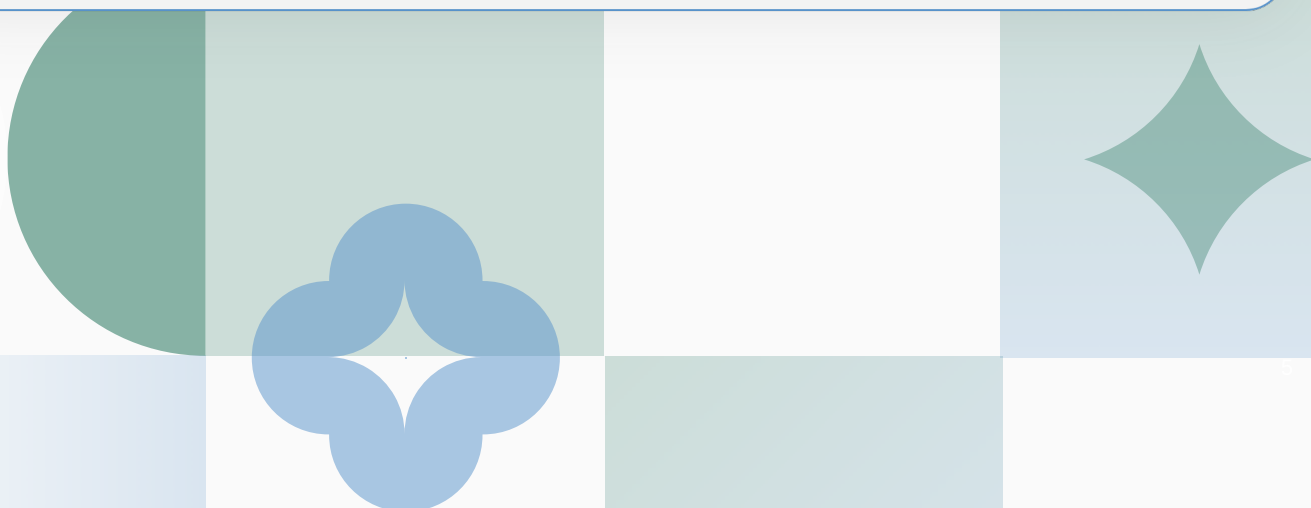
Teaching for impact in water action

Topic: Understanding what methods and actions make learning effective and why the ability to teach is a leadership competency.

SESSION 2

Designing for action

Topic: Applying those principles to design and peer-review a youth-focused IWRM training session.



Multiplying knowledge through WFF National Chapters

Beyond participating in the learning sessions and developing their own project proposals, participants took on another role: educators who multiplied knowledge.

Building on their respective areas of professional expertise, participants applied the knowledge and skills gained through ALEP on Water Action to design and deliver training sessions for WFF Youth National Chapters. They adapted the learning to different local contexts and audiences, extending the programme's reach beyond the initial cohort and creating a multiplier effect that brought knowledge and skills to wider youth communities.

The sessions covered a range of topics, from responsible water management to value chains and water, and were delivered in the following countries: Algeria, Australia, Bhutan, Burundi, Egypt, Hungary, Indonesia, Libya, Morocco, Nepal, Pakistan, Senegal, Somalia, Türkiye, Uganda and Zambia.

Learning with FAO experts

Learning did not happen in isolation. The programme paired participants with mentors, mostly experts from FAO, who dedicated their time and expertise to support the participants in the development and refinement of their project proposals.

But the value of mentorship goes beyond technical guidance. Mentors provided feedback on how to turn ideas into feasible projects, shared professional perspectives and experiences, helped participants navigate challenges and, in many cases, introduced participants to new connections and networks. This intergenerational exchange became an important part of the journey, creating a space where experience and new perspectives could come together, and where young professionals could find both the guidance and confidence to move their ideas forward.

Turning learning into project ideas

The programme challenged participants to turn their learning into an actionable idea.

By identifying water-related challenges in their contexts and developing project proposals to address them, participants successfully met this challenge. Several of these projects have progressed to explore opportunities and partnerships that could support their implementation, extending the ALEP on Water Action experience beyond the programme itself. To learn more about the projects, their objectives and proposed solutions, explore the Project Portfolio.

What are we learning?

Throughout this year, one lesson has become increasingly clear: education is most powerful when it goes beyond the transfer of knowledge. Addressing complex water challenges requires young professionals who have both the technical understanding as well as the confidence, skills and networks to turn knowledge into action. Mentorship, expert guidance and peer exchange are essential in building that capacity.

We are also learning that the strongest solutions to water resource challenges emerge through inclusive dialogue that brings together different disciplines, experiences and perspectives.

Finally, knowledge enhances in value when it is shared. FAO's technical expertise on water is a powerful resource and making it accessible to young people eager to lead change, can create a multiplier effect that extends far beyond the ALEP on Water Action programme.

What comes next?

The next step is to follow how learning translates into action. This means continuing to accompany project proposals as they move towards implementation and learning from the solutions they test in different contexts. It also means reconnecting with WFF Youth National Chapters that received training to understand how this knowledge is being integrated into their activities, agendas and priorities.

At the same time, the experience reinforces the importance of creating continued opportunities within FAO for young professionals to learn, gain experience and grow as leaders. Connecting them with mentors, technical experts and peers, while giving them opportunities to develop and put their ideas into practice, can help turn learning into sustained action.

FAO has sought and will continue to strive to strengthen both the people and knowledge systems needed to sustainably transform agrifood systems. Initiatives such as the Capacity Development Programme for Water, Soil and Land in Agriculture (WaSaLA), reflect FAO's commitment to creating these spaces beyond individual programmes. By creating opportunities for continuous learning, capacity development and knowledge expansion, such initiatives can help young professionals remain engaged with natural resources management challenges while strengthening the technical and practical skills they need to advance better production, better nutrition, a better environment and a better life for all, leaving no one behind.