



WORLD FOOD FORUM **YOUNG SCIENTISTS GROUP**

TERMS OF REFERENCE
2027-2029 COHORT

Background

World Food Forum

The engagement and empowerment of youth in agrifood systems transformation are pivotal to creating a more sustainable, resilient and equitable future for all, accelerating the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), in particular, SDG2 (Zero Hunger). By investing in and empowering young leaders, fostering innovation and ensuring inclusive participation, youth can spearhead action towards tangible impact.

The [World Food Forum \(WFF\)](#) is an open and inclusive global platform established by the [Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations \(FAO\)](#) in 2021 to drive the transformation of agrifood systems through the power of youth, science and innovation, and investment. It brings together stakeholders of all ages and sectors to turn ideas into action, scale solutions and foster meaningful partnerships that accelerate progress towards the SDGs.

In alignment with the [FAO Strategic Framework 2022-31](#) and its guiding principles of the four betters (Better Production, Better Nutrition, Better Environment, and Better Life), the [WFF's Global Youth Action Initiative](#) (Youth Initiative) facilitated by the FAO Office of Youth and Women harnesses the passion and power of youth to transform our agrifood systems. It strives to spark youth engagement in food governance, foster innovation and support youth-led solutions for a sustainable future.

The WFF Youth Initiative is implemented through a set of programmes, that work together to create awareness, foster engagement and inspire youth-led transformative action. The [Youth Assembly](#) amplifies youth voices in policy discussions; [Youth Entrepreneurship and Innovation Programme](#) empowers young innovators; [Youth Education Programme](#) provides learning opportunities and resources that enable young people to become agents of change; [Youth Culture and Food Heritage Programme](#) inspires and empowers youth through film, art, music and gastronomy; [Young Women's Empowerment Programme](#) places young women at the centre of agrifood systems transformation, and [Local Youth Action](#) mobilizes youth at local level to transform agrifood systems.

WFF Young Scientists Group

The WFF Young Scientists Group (YSG) was launched in 2022 with the aim of providing scientific evidence and technical knowledge to the various activities of the WFF Youth Initiative. The YSG provides a mechanism through which emerging researchers and scientists can contribute technical knowledge, evidence and research perspectives to OYW's work and, where relevant, to wider FAO and partner initiatives connected to youth and agrifood systems transformation.

Through its work, the YSG can help identify and synthesize relevant scientific evidence, bring emerging research and perspectives to the attention of OYW, and facilitate connections between young scientists, FAO technical experts and the broader scientific community. The YSG can also contribute technical inputs to WFF activities and Youth Assembly consultations, where appropriate, strengthening these through evidence-based knowledge.

The primary output of the group is the publication of a biennial report focusing on specific technical issues of particular relevance to youth and agrifood systems transformation. The publication can serve as a resource for FAO, youth actors and other partners, supporting informed dialogue, learning, programming and engagement around emerging agrifood systems challenges.

Current members of the YSG are listed on the WFF website [here](#).

Ethical principles and standards

All YSG members are expected to uphold the ethical principles and standards of the United Nations and to demonstrate integrity, responsibility, respect, professionalism and collaboration in all their activities. The WFF Youth Initiative strongly encourages the participation of young people from diverse backgrounds and contexts, including Indigenous Peoples, women and other groups whose perspectives are often underrepresented in research and academia.

YSG members are expected to maintain scientific integrity and transparency in their work, distinguish evidence from personal views, appropriately acknowledge sources and contributions, and disclose any substantive use of generative Artificial Intelligence (AI) technology or other tools, technologies or external contributions that materially inform or contribute to their work.

The YSG operates in an advisory and scientific capacity for the WFF Youth Initiative. Membership of the YSG does not confer authority to speak on behalf of FAO.

Structure and duties

The work of the YSG is organized into a quarterly plan spread across a two-year term. The first year is primarily dedicated to consultations, priority-setting, evidence gathering, technical exchanges and contributions to relevant WFF activities. During this period, the YSG will work with the WFF Youth Initiative to identify the thematic focus and scope of the biennial report.

The second year is mainly dedicated to the research, drafting, peer review, finalization and dissemination of the YSG report, while members may continue to provide technical inputs to relevant WFF activities and consultations, as appropriate.

The YSG's responsibilities include:

1. Provide technical and scientific inputs to support the work of the WFF and contribute evidence and research perspectives to relevant FAO and partner initiatives;
2. Contribute to technical discussions and consultations with the WFF Youth Assembly and the [WFF Youth Policy Board](#), including by identifying emerging evidence and research gaps;
3. Develop a biennial evidence-based report on a technical issue of particular relevance to youth and agrifood systems transformation;
4. Undertake research and evidence synthesis, including literature reviews and other short research outputs, where appropriate; and
5. Support knowledge exchange and outreach around the findings of the report and other YSG outputs, including through appropriate WFF Youth Initiative channels and events.

YSG members may participate in meetings, events, interviews, podcasts and other outreach activities in their capacity as YSG members and subject to appropriate authorization and guidance. Members do not represent FAO or the WFF Youth Initiative and should not speak on behalf of FAO or make institutional positions or commitments on its behalf.

Biennial report

The YSG biennial report is developed in consultation with relevant FAO technical experts, the YPB and with relevant scientific and research networks. It is intended to complement, rather than duplicate, existing FAO knowledge products and processes, while bringing youth-oriented perspectives and synthesizing evidence on the chosen topic.

The thematic focus of the report is identified towards the end of the first year of each YSG term, based on emerging priority issues identified through Youth Assembly consultations.

Topics are selected based on their relevance to agrifood systems transformation and emerging scientific evidence, while taking into account FAO's strategic and technical priorities for the relevant period.

The development of the report follows a rigorous research and peer-review process, reflecting the standards expected in postgraduate-level research. This will include a clear methodological approach, literature review and evidence assessment, engagement with relevant subject-matter experts and review of drafts by qualified peers and/or FAO technical experts, as appropriate.

Participation in the YSG offers early-career researchers an opportunity to strengthen their experience in interdisciplinary research, scientific writing, evidence synthesis and science-policy engagement through the contribution to high-level dialogues.

Selection

YSG members are selected through an open and competitive selection process. The composition of the YSG aims to reflect gender parity and regional balance. Each cohort is engaged for two years, with the possibility of members reapplying to be part of the following cohort. The term of any individual YSG member shall not exceed a maximum of two cohorts (4 years).

Eligibility criteria

The eligibility criteria for joining the YSG is as follows:

- Applicants must have graduated or be enrolled in a graduate degree programme at the time of application;
- Be between 18 and 35 years of age as of 31 December 2028;
- Be national of a FAO Member State;
- Be specialized in a field relevant to the mission and work of FAO. Alignment with the [WFF Youth Assembly's thematic areas](#) is preferred, but not mandatory;
- Have demonstrated proficiency in spoken and written English. Having conducted previous academic work in English is preferred, but not mandatory;
- Be able to dedicate approximately 20 hours per month to the role;
- Demonstrate the ability to work effectively in an international, multicultural environment and possess strong intercultural communication skills;
- Not be immediate family members (spouses, parents, children, siblings or their respective spouses) of FAO employees; and
- Not be employed by FAO.

Selection process

The selection process consists of three rounds:

- **Round 1:** The WFF Youth Initiative team will review applications and score candidates based on eligibility and experience;
- **Round 2:** A selection committee composed of FAO experts from different areas of work will further assess applications and create a shortlist. Candidates advancing to this stage will be asked to submit a letter of recommendation and a two-minute video explaining how they would contribute to the YSG; and
- **Round 3:** Top candidates will be invited to interviews, with final selections based on interview performance and overall ranking.

The selection process will seek to ensure an appropriate balance of scientific and technical expertise, geographical and gender diversity, and disciplinary perspectives relevant to FAO's priorities.