



WORLD  
FOOD  
FORUM

GLOBAL  
YOUTH  
ACTION



Youth  
ASSEMBLY



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# Youth Statement for the Transformation of Agrifood Systems in Africa



Regional Conference  
for Africa



Mauritania  
Nouakchott, 13-17 April 2026

## Introduction

We, the youth from Africa, have come together through a youth-inclusive consultative process to identify shared challenges and co-create actionable recommendations in the lead-up to the 34th Session of the Regional Conference for Africa of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO). The Regional Conferences are the highest Governing Bodies of FAO at the regional level, where Ministers of Agriculture, Members and key stakeholders come together to discuss key challenges and define priority areas of work for the following biennium. They serve as platforms for regional consultation, coordination and advice on policies, programmes and performance within the Organization's mandate, while also supporting the formulation of coherent regional positions on global issues.

This process, organized jointly by the World Food Forum (WFF) Youth Assembly Secretariat and the FAO Regional Office for Africa, engaged young people from across the region through a large-scale survey and virtual consultations. Over 900 young people from 48 countries participated in a survey and more than 300 joined the virtual discussions. Youth from diverse backgrounds- including farmers, fishers, pastoralists, agripreneurs, researchers, students and other stakeholders are represented throughout these recommendations.

Through this consultative process, we identified our shared challenges, including limited access to resources, finance and markets, the impacts of climate change and economic shocks. Many young people still work in informal and agricultural sectors, often facing low income and limited support. We recognize that youth, especially young women, are often left out of the decision-making process, lack practical skills and face barriers to digital access and secure land tenure.

To build a better future, Africa's agrifood systems must put youth at the centre. Our continent is home to over 532 million young people aged 15–35, and projections indicate that by 2030, approximately one in four young people in the world will be African. Our growing youth population brings great potential but also urgent challenges, especially around jobs and economic opportunities. Young people are not just beneficiaries, they are innovators, entrepreneurs and leaders who can drive change.

This declaration reflects the voices of African youth and calls for concrete action: removing structural barriers, ensuring meaningful youth participation in decision-making - including policy processes - guaranteeing equitable access to resources and finance and supporting innovation and knowledge sharing for more inclusive and resilient agrifood systems.

Figure 1. Who participated in this consultation?

### Africa's Subregions

Eastern Africa  
**341 (36%)**

Central Africa  
**245 (26%)**

Western Africa  
**235 (25%)**

Southern Africa  
**118 (13%)**

### Do you identify as a member of any of the following groups?

Rural or agricultural communities **654 (63%)**

Other **146 (14%)**

Prefer not to say **96 (9%)**

Refugee, migrant, or internally displaced communities **62 (6%)**

Nomadic communities **52 (5%)**

Person with disability **31 (3%)**

Respondents span all four African sub-regions, with Eastern Africa (**36%**) and Central Africa (**26%**) most represented. Nearly two thirds identify as members of rural or agricultural communities, reflecting the strong grounding of these recommendations in agrifood realities on the ground. The presence of nomadic communities, refugees and displaced youth further highlights the diversity of experiences and contexts that these recommendations must speak to.

## I. Key youth recommendations for Members and FAO

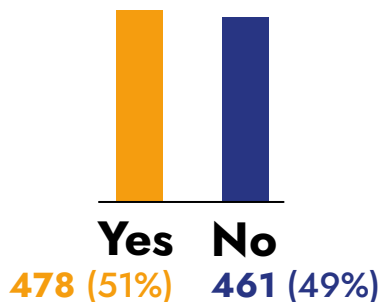
### Placing youth at the centre of the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Program (CAADP) Strategy and Action Plan Implementation (2026–2035)

*The CAADP Strategy and Action Plan outlines the African Union's long-term roadmap for transforming agrifood systems across the continent. With youth representing the largest and fastest growing demographic in Africa, their meaningful participation and leadership are essential to effective implementation. The following recommendations reflect youth priorities to strengthen delivery and ensure the strategy responds to their realities and contributions.*

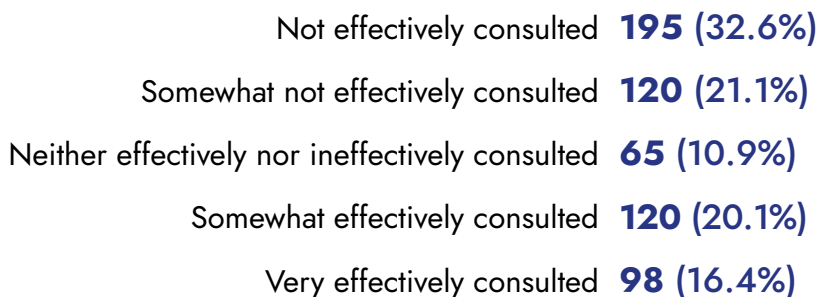
1. Raise awareness of the CAADP Kampala Declaration at the national level among youth to address the limited knowledge of CAADP identified during the consultations. Collaborate with the WFF Youth Policy Board members and National Youth Chapters to support this dissemination, for example by co-hosting national youth dialogues on the Kampala Declaration. Establishing a dedicated tracking and communication platform would further support transparent information-sharing, monitor progress and strengthen accountability in the implementation of CAADP commitments.
2. Establish a dedicated tracking and communication platform to further support transparent information-sharing, monitor progress and strengthen accountability in the implementation of CAADP commitments.
3. Ensure meaningful and substantive youth participation in decision-making processes, policy design, implementation and monitoring. This could include formally designated seats for youth representatives in national policy bodies, interministerial committees and sectoral working groups, with clearly defined roles, responsibilities and accountability mechanisms. Transparent and merit-based selection processes should be established, with particular attention to young women, rural youth, Indigenous youth, youth with disabilities, and youth from underrepresented, vulnerable or displaced communities.
4. Consult and actively engage youth as co-creators throughout the policy development process, rather than only during consultation stages. Structured platforms such as the WFF Youth Assembly and National Youth Chapters can support this approach by enabling sustained dialogue and collaboration. Strengthening two-way communication systems is also essential to translate policies into accessible formats and local languages, while ensuring that feedback from grassroots youth is systematically captured and reflected in policy processes.
5. Empower youth representatives to engage effectively and confidently through targeted capacity development, including training on national, regional and international policy processes, budgeting, climate governance, negotiation and the translation of international commitments to national and local contexts.
6. Establish robust coordination frameworks to align international commitments with local, national and regional development plans. These platforms can bring together governments, the private sector, youth organizations and other key stakeholders to prevent fragmented implementation and support the scaling-up of solutions across sectors. Regular multi-stakeholder dialogues at national and subnational levels can further help address gaps and identify synergies and collaborative approaches. Dedicated coordination units or focal points may also support coherence across climate, agrifood, employment and youth policies.



Figure 2. Have you heard of the CAADP/Kampala Declaration?



How effectively are youth organizations currently consulted on national agrifood policies stemming from the CAADP framework in your country?



Awareness of CAADP and the Kampala Declaration is present among half of respondents (51%), demonstrating an existing foundation on which to build broader youth engagement. Among those aware, 36.5% report being effectively or very effectively consulted — a meaningful starting point that underscores the value of the structured participation mechanisms called for in recommendations 1 through 5 to strengthen and scale what is already working.



## II. Strengthening the resilience of agrifood systems

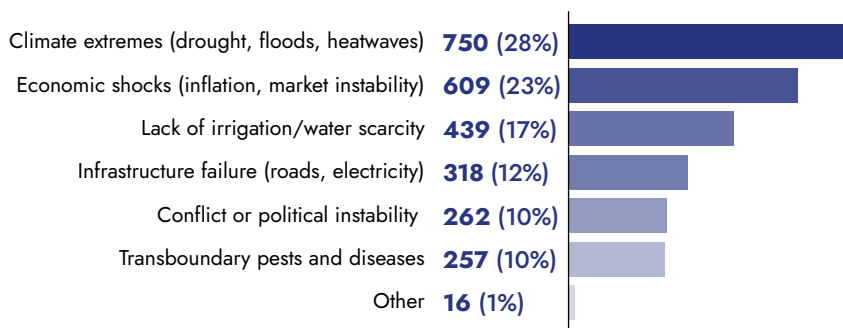
*Building resilient agrifood systems is critical to Africa’s ability to withstand climate shocks, safeguard livelihoods and ensure long-term food security. Strengthening resilience requires empowering communities, especially youth to adopt climate-smart practices, access resources and participate meaningfully in shaping the future of food systems. The recommendations below highlight how youth envision strengthening agrifood systems across the continent.*

7. Invest in targeted training for rural communities on climate adaptation strategies, including climate-smart agriculture practices, integrated pest management and sustainable irrigation, like solar-powered irrigation pumps.
8. Strengthen social protection systems for farmers, including agricultural insurance, to help cushion smallholder farmers against crises and losses and enhance their resilience, while encouraging them to make greater agricultural investments.
9. Strengthen the inclusion of youth, particularly young women, young farmers, rural youth, Indigenous youth, youth in Small Island Developing States (SIDS) and other vulnerable groups, through capacity development in entrepreneurship and improved access to land and finance. Ensuring their meaningful participation in decision-making processes will contribute to more inclusive and sustainable agrifood systems.

**Figure 3. Greatest threats to local agrifood system resilience**

### Which three types of risks pose the greatest threat to the resilience of your local agrifood system?

Respondents were asked to select the three greatest threats to their local agrifood system.



Climate extremes (cited by 80% of respondents), economic shocks (65%) and water scarcity (47%) are the dominant threats shaping young people’s experience of agrifood systems across the continent. The consistency of these priorities across sub-regions makes a strong case for the integrated, climate-smart and socially protective investments called for in recommendations 7 and 8.

### III. Enhancing financing for agrifood systems

*Finance is a cornerstone of agrifood systems transformation in Africa and globally, enabling the scaling of climate-smart agriculture, improved productivity, stronger value chains and enhanced food security. Yet, young people continue to face systemic barriers in accessing finance, including limited collateral, high perceived risk by lenders, lack of credit history, restrictive land-ownership policies and the absence of tailored financial products. The following recommendations reflect youth priorities for improving access to finance and unlocking their full potential within agrifood systems.*

15. Improve awareness of and access to agricultural financing opportunities, including through the creation of centralized digital platforms that compile available financing instruments such as grants, loans, investment funds and guarantees. These platforms should be widely promoted, including in rural areas, through local information points such as chambers of agriculture, cooperatives and incubators. Information should be clear, simplified, available in local languages and complemented by practical support to help youth prepare and submit applications.
16. Establish, where not yet existent, youth-specific funds and youth-favourable instruments, such as agricultural micro-loans, community-level revolving funds, de-risking mechanisms and youth quotas in public procurement. Put in place suitable youth-inclusive climate-smart agriculture financing with affordable interest rates, flexible guarantees and repayment periods aligned with agricultural cycles. These instruments should be accompanied by fair and transparent eligibility and selection criteria to ensure equitable access.
17. Create or strengthen agricultural banks, with a clear mandate focused on young people and small and medium-sized rural enterprises. These banks should offer financial products, packages and services tailored to agricultural cycles (grace periods, post-harvest repayment, integrated climate insurance), along with preferential rates that do not require land titles or major assets as collateral. Public guarantee mechanisms should also be established to reduce lending risks.
18. Strengthen monitoring of supported youth-led agribusinesses to address existing data gaps, including through the establishment and regular updating of dedicated databases, complemented by field verification where appropriate.
19. Encourage the establishment of youth cooperatives to enable access to funding, land, markets and other resources as a more organized body, thus also minimizing transaction costs.
20. Expand capacity-building programmes on investment readiness for youth-led agribusinesses. These programmes need to include guidance on the regulatory and non-regulatory aspects of investment readiness, market access, peer-to-peer learning and mentorship and embed networking opportunities, such as dialogues with stakeholders and pitching events, to improve access to business opportunities.
21. Set up and strengthen incubators that specialize in the agrifood sector to help transform ideas into viable and bankable businesses by offering comprehensive support: management training and financial education, mentoring by industry experts, technical support (production, processing, quality standards), structured access to markets, mindset change and linkage to financial institutions.
22. Address land access as a key barrier to agricultural finance, as land ownership is often limited to inheritance, restricting youth's ability to use land as collateral, with young women facing additional constraints due to social norms and limited access to credit to acquire land independently.



## IV. Promoting sustainable resource management, blue transformation and the bioeconomy

*Sustainable resource management, blue transformation and the bioeconomy are critical pillars for long-term resilience, competitiveness and agrifood systems transformation in Africa. Growing pressures including, land degradation, biodiversity loss, water scarcity, climate change and rising population demands are increasing the need for more sustainable and regenerative approaches to managing natural resources. Addressing these challenges requires integrated solutions that link ecology, technology and community-driven solutions. The following recommendations reflect youth priorities for advancing and scaling solutions in these areas across Africa.*

23. Promote youth-centred value addition across agrifood and circular economy sectors that foster integrated and inclusive land and water management.
24. Recognize urban and peri-urban agriculture as a strategic necessity in city planning to strengthen food security, reduce reliance on rural supply chains and ensure affordable, fresh produce is accessible to urban populations.
25. Provide targeted training through mentorship and other forms of capacity development on blue literacy and the integration of Indigenous knowledge with innovative and digital technologies. These issues should be included in education curricula, including in early education programmes. Training must be gender-sensitive and designed to be accessible to both young women and men.
26. Create and support platforms that provide youth with the necessary tools, finance and technology to address climate change and market access. Digital tools and climate information systems, such as the [CBE CLIMA Tool](#), should be scaled up and adapted to local contexts to improve access to climate data and early warning information.
27. Partnerships with financial institutions, technology providers and research organizations can help ensure that youth-led initiatives are not only supported at the pilot stage but are also viable, scalable and sustainable over time.
28. Recognize the unique vulnerabilities and needs of youth in African SIDS, ensuring that blue economy initiatives address the impacts of climate change on coastal and marine ecosystems, high dependence on imports, and the need for tailored financing and technology transfer. Regional cooperation among SIDS should be prioritized to share best practices and strengthen resilience.



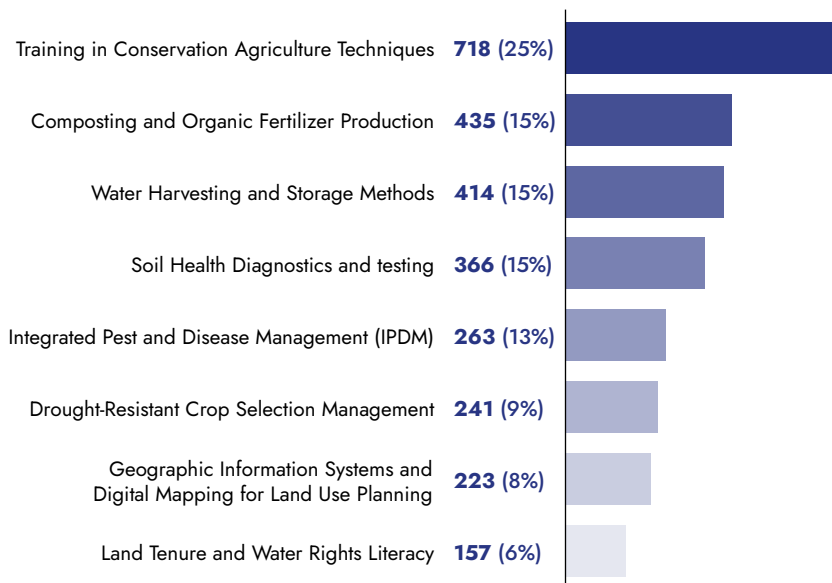
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Figure 4. Training priorities for land, soil and water management

What specific training related to land, soil, or water management would be most useful for young people in your community?



Young people show a clear and consistent appetite for practical, farm-level skills: Conservation Agriculture Techniques (25% of selections), Composting (15%) and Water Harvesting (15%) lead training preferences across the region. This demand for applied knowledge — directly aligned with recommendation 7 — reflects youth readiness to engage as active contributors to sustainable resource management in their communities.



## V. Strengthening the management of transboundary pests and diseases

*Transboundary pests and diseases continue to pose significant risks to Africa's agrifood systems, affecting crop and livestock production, disrupting markets and threatening food security and livelihoods. Invasive species such as Fall Armyworm (FAW) and Larger Grain Borer have caused severe crop losses and undermined rural livelihoods across the continent. Young farmers and agripreneurs are especially affected, often lacking access to early-warning information systems, affordable pest-management technologies and reliable extension support. The following recommendations reflect youth priorities for strengthening the management of transboundary pests and diseases.*

29. Increase awareness-raising at the local level on prevention, identification and quarantine, particularly among farmers and within informal markets where significant transmission of pests and diseases occurs. In community-level interventions, ensure that women and youth who often care for and manage livestock are intentionally included.
30. Strengthen and expand the capacity of young farmers, particularly young women farmers and those living with disabilities, through technology-supported training to help farmers identify pests early. Place a strong emphasis on innovation and digital tools such as mobile diagnostics, remote sensing and data-driven monitoring systems. Training should be gender-sensitive and designed to ensure accessibility in its format, content and delivery.
31. Explore the use of new and innovative technologies, including Artificial Intelligence, for improved forecasting of threats, effective surveillance and monitoring systems, giving particular attention to improving cross-border coordination. Empower youth and women to develop and utilize these new technologies to support early detection and regional collaboration. For example, prioritizing local initiatives that train youth as plant-health scouts using geo-tagged photos and digital reporting tools to track outbreaks and improve rapid response.
32. Streamline two-way channels of communication for information-sharing on outbreak of pests and diseases, facilitating farmers' feedback and input into response mechanisms and provide training on effective communication approaches to strengthen these interactions.



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NAME: BUNTHA CANADENSIS

## CONCLUSION

As such, we, as Young Africans, issue a strong and urgent call to FAO and Members to adopt and act on the recommendations presented in this statement. We urge a shift beyond symbolic representation towards meaningful and substantive participation in decision-making processes at all levels. We also invite member nations, civil society organisations and multilateral organisations to walk alongside us in collectively transforming agrifood systems to ensure that the transition ahead is inclusive, equitable and powered by the leadership of Africa's Youth.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We extend our appreciation to the WFF Youth Policy Board members: Feyisayo Akande, Juan Pierre, Richard Tusiime, Tokelo Shai, as well as the WFF National Youth Chapters from Africa and the more than 1 200 youth who contributed their expertise, insights and experiences throughout the consultative process.

Special appreciation is further extended to the FAO Regional Office for Africa, in particular Janetta Carlucci and Caesar Valley, as well as to members of the WFF Youth Assembly Secretariat, including Ana Aviles, Alina Gerke and Nina Adams for their continued support and collaboration.





## The Youth Assembly of the World Food Forum

### *Connecting Youth Voices to Policy*

The Youth Assembly of the World Food Forum (WFF) is a youth-led platform and the cornerstone of the WFF's approach to institutionalized youth engagement in agrifood systems governance. Driven by young people through a Youth Policy Board, with the FAO Office of Youth and Women (OYW) hosting the Secretariat, the Assembly works in close collaboration with FAO technical divisions to ensure that youth engagement is evidence-based, policy-relevant, and technically sound.

The Assembly provides structured and sustained opportunities for youth to engage in global, regional, and thematic policy dialogue through consultations, intergenerational exchanges, and youth-led research and recommendations, bringing together a diverse spectrum of youth stakeholders across regions, backgrounds, and areas of expertise – moving beyond tokenistic representation towards genuine inclusion.

By linking youth perspectives with FAO's technical expertise, the Assembly strengthens young people's capacity to contribute meaningfully to decision-making while serving as a sounding board for FAO on emerging priorities and implementation challenges. This two-way engagement supports youth in moving from consultation to action and embeds their contributions within FAO's institutional processes and broader intergovernmental spaces, including FAO governance bodies and global policy forums such as the Rio Conventions and the Commission on the Status of Women.



Learn more about the  
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