

YOUNG FARMERS'

MANIFESTO



INTRODUCTION

The global population of young people aged 15-24 is around 1.2 billion, which represents over 14 % of the global population with approximately 88% of them living in developing countries (60 % in Asia and 18 % in Africa ⁱ). By 2030, the target date for the sustainable development goals, the number of youth is projected to have grown by 7%, to nearly 1.3 billion. Young farmers represent a large share of the youth, however, their future is threatened by a number of challenges.

In Europe, the farmers' population accounts for about 12 million farmers, of which only 6% are aged below 35 years ⁱⁱ old. The average age of a farmer anywhere in the world is about 60 years old. Some encouraging data comes from Latin America where farmers are 20 years younger than the average age of their colleagues in Europe; and 25 years younger compared with the average in North America.

As farmers have the mandate of feeding the world, ensuring food and nutrition security, this is an alarming data and a cause for concern for agriculture on a long term, young farmers and the international community.

Young farmers present a huge goldmine that can provide the solution to the main challenges of the 21st century as well as a strong potential to modernize an ageing agricultural sector that needs to be rejuvenated if a sustainable future and social stability for the Planet are to be achieved.

Through a number of pleas, young farmers of the World are proposing suggestions and solutions that would make youth access to sustainable farming easier and make the planet sustainability a reality:

ⁱ <http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/documents/youth/fact-sheets/YouthPOP.pdf>

ⁱⁱ http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_MEMO-13-631_en.htm

CLAIMS

GENERATIONAL RENEWAL

All over the world, young people face enormous challenges to find a profession, and those working in agriculture are not an exception. Despite the enormous effort youth make in agriculture, they still face a lot of difficulties in being involved in the sector.

This is mostly due to a series of barriers that youth have to circumvent such as, access to land; education; finance and innovation, as well as, lack of regulations facilitating youth access to agriculture; scarce availability of older generations to cede the drive of farms; succession plan and tax incentives.

Without young farmers it would be impossible to face many of the challenges this planet is called to address in the next 50 years, i.e.: poverty eradication, food security, climate change, social stability, economic growth, and thus stronger generation renewal plans should be created.

It is, therefore, necessary to carry out sensitisation of the current generation of farmers about generation renewal in agriculture and to provide incentives for those retiring.

ENABLING ENVIRONMENT

Young farmers request their respective national governments for an improved livelihood in rural areas. These areas need access to infrastructures, particularly: internet broad band facilities, effective health system, welfare, accessible roads, recreational facilities, banking institutions, schools and the social support provided by the intranet of young farmers should be enhanced.

With the right infrastructures, urban and environmental migration can be mitigated and rural areas can become recipient of skilled professionals of all kind.

INSTITUTIONAL CAPACITY

Young farmers require support to form their own institutions i.e. Associations, Cooperatives, Organizations, Movements, recognized by national authorities, in order to network and collaborate with other stakeholders and policy-makers. Those institutions should also be seen as a valuable partner by governments and other stakeholders.

This process would facilitate the advocacy activities of young farmers by enhancing their institutional capacity and provide a voice and sense of ownership for the youth.

FARMERS' PROMOTION

Promoting farming as a viable business opportunity for young people is necessary to enhance a positive image of agriculture among societies. This should be part of the youth's education path.

Consumers and civil society are to be informed about the reality in the agricultural sector, by showcasing successful farming best practices. Raising consumers' awareness on the multifunctional role of agriculture, including the three components: economic, social and environmental is needed.

EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES

Young farmers need support to drive equal opportunities irrespective of gender, education, geographical origin, farm size, sexual orientation, religion etc.

ACCESS TO FINANCE, CREDIT, INPUT AND INSURANCE

Governments should facilitate young farmers' access to finance, credit, input and insurance. Moreover, young farmers should be granted access to education, to specific training on economics and business plans' creation.

Financial institutions should create special young farmers' scheme and facilitate sharing of information, training and capacity building training. They should also apply a reduced interest rate for loans to young farmers to improve their access to farming and efficiency in the production process. The possibility of using as collateral non-conventional assets, such as: intellectual capital (IP, business plan, innovation output); livestock; products should be considered.

ACCESS TO KNOWLEDGE AND INNOVATION

Agriculture has innovated since ancient time and farmers have always been at the base of the innovating chain in agriculture. Young farmers can be an excellent ally in supporting research and development R&D if duly involved.

R&D results should be available to or shared with young farmers. Innovation research has to be supported by all stakeholders i.e. governmental and non-governmental bodies; private sector; research community; farmers. The research output should be available to young farmers through specific innovation training programs i.e. extensions program, innovation management, innovation building or any kind of training, allowing young farmers to improve their skills and also share their traditional knowledge. Scientists should be acquainted with young farmers' issues and these have to be involved in the research process.

Traditional education systems, should be combined with on-farm training, including farmer-to-farmer exchange and at all times involve the practical approach.

ACCESS TO INFORMATION

Information such as market prices, meteorological information, or innovations and research on products should be made available to young farmers. This information has to be transparent, updated, understandable and immediately implementable by the young farmers.

ACCESS TO MARKET AND VALUE CHAIN

Access to market and value chain are issues that severely affect the agricultural sector to the point that most of the time farmers are the object of decisions taken by other actors within the value chain.

To overcome this obstacle and be recognized as a real economic actor young farmers need to enhance their capacity to engage in political discussions on trade with concerned Institutions and players. Young farmers are ready to negotiate with other value chain actors for their market conditions, volatility risks and other value chain risks that should be shared by the entire value chain and not only borne by farmers.

ACCESS TO EDUCATION

Young farmers' skills development should be prioritized by Governments and proper programmes have to be put in place by all Governments, universities and parallel educational programs. The right of young farmers to be properly literate and educated should be recognized at global, national and local levels. Even when educated, young farmers should have access to further education programs, graduate or post graduate studies, of practical and theoretical nature. Traditional education systems, educational programs evaluation and re-assessment should involve young farmers' input, based on their experience as beneficiaries and young professionals.

ACCESS TO LAND

Governments should formulate policies that allow young farmers to access land. National authorities, religious entities and cultural institutions should give priorities to young farmers in their land allocation processes (if any). Legislation and national or institutional programmes should facilitate the transfer of land to young farmers.

Land registration for farmers should be established and the registration rights should be affordable for young farmers.

MANIFESTO

We, young farmers of the World, advocate for the right of all young farmers to be agropreneurs.

Respecting the diversity of the farming community, regardless of the farms' size, the farmers' age, their gender, sexual orientation, geographical location i.e. developed or developing countries, religion and cultural identity: indigenous or non-indigenous peoples,

Respecting the land and environment, contributing to engage with other stakeholders and develop policies that strengthen farmers' role in fighting climate change,

Are willing to work with a responsible industry which is available to share, discuss and partner with young farmers to cope with the most relevant challenges the planet currently faces, i.e.: food insecurity, climate change, social instability, in light of a mutual respect and acknowledging the relevance of young farmers in all value chains.

Advocate for reasonable regulations providing professional and learning opportunities that can allow young farmers an adequate career development, as well as, to facilitate the generational renewal.

Promote an enabling framework of rules that facilitates access to land, capital, market, education and innovation, providing adequate opportunities and fair economic returns.

We, young farmers of the world, are willing to work with other stakeholders to achieve global food security and provide viable solutions that can ensure social stability in the world.

Support young farmers, support the future!

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