



FOOD SECURITY WORKING GROUP
GROUPE DE TRAVAIL SECURITE
ALIMENTAIRE

G7 Framework on decent job creation for rural youth in the Sahel

Given that one person in every nine worldwide is undernourished (821 million people in 2017), the G7 members remain committed to finding sustainable solutions to food insecurity and malnutrition in order to “leave no one behind” and reduce global inequality. Against this background, we are deeply concerned that efforts to reduce hunger and malnutrition in all its forms are off-track, especially given that SDG2 is essential to achieving the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. There is an urgent need to achieve food security in a sustainable way to ensure a nutritious, accessible and affordable diet for all, while creating decent¹ jobs for the growing rural and urban youth population.

Acknowledging that in order to eliminate food insecurity, it is necessary to address the root causes of poverty in the Sahel region (G5 countries), we believe that more decent jobs are part of the solutions in order to reduce poverty, food insecurity and malnutrition simultaneously. They can also help tackle inequalities that constitute a fertile ground upon which crises and conflicts may arise. Noting the driving force of the food economy in Sahel countries and its role in inclusive rural development, we will concentrate our efforts on leveraging sustainable food systems² for decent job creation through all upstream (pre-harvest) and downstream activities including production at farm level, processing, packaging, transportation, distribution and retail, as well as the educational and teaching aspects. The G7 members consider that sustainable food systems should always be resilient. Considering the paramount importance of adolescent girls and young women’s roles in sustainable food systems, the G7 members recognize that all measures for rural youth employment must be gender-sensitive.

Further acknowledging that the labour force will increase by 46 million young people (15-35 years old) by 2050³ in the Sahel region and that sustainable food systems will remain a major provider of jobs, we will increase our efforts to support decent jobs creation for the rural youth in the Sahel region. These efforts will help us achieve the ambitious Elmau target of “aiming to lift 500 million people in developing countries out of hunger and malnutrition by 2030”, as further specified for Africa at the G7 Taormina Summit⁴.

Building upon previous G7 commitments and other ongoing initiatives such as the G20 Initiative for Rural Youth Employment and the Africa-Europe Alliance for Sustainable Investment and Jobs, the G7 has identified coordination and alignment with G5 Sahel countries’ policies as overarching principles of their partnership. This framework focuses on sustainable food systems and territorial approaches as new inclusive paradigms. Through this lens, two main focus areas (opportunity and capability) have been identified to create decent jobs for rural youth in the G5 Sahel countries. The French presidency is grateful to the 3 Rome-based agencies (FAO, IFAD, WFP) for their contribution which has provided the basis for the G7 members’ reflection.

¹ “Decent work sums up the aspirations of people in their working lives. It involves opportunities for work that is productive and delivers a fair income, security in the workplace and social protection for families, better prospects for personal development and social integration, freedom for people to express their concerns, organize and participate in the decisions that affect their lives and equality of opportunity and treatment for all women and men.” (ILO definition)

² “Food systems gather all the elements (environment, people, inputs, processes, infrastructures, institutions, etc.) and activities that relate to the production, processing, distribution, preparation and consumption of food, and the output of these activities, including socio-economic and environmental outcomes” (CFS definition)

³ Source: UNDESA (compared to 2015 baseline)

⁴ Source : G7 Taormina Leaders’ Communiqué, para. 29



Overarching principles: G7 coordination and alignment with G5 Sahel countries' policies

Tightening G7 coordination and alignment with G5 countries' policies

In line with the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness and the Accra Agenda for Action, we recall the importance of country ownership, alignment with partner's strategies and harmonized action by donors. These principles are crucial in order to provide an appropriate, ambitious and effective response to the challenges G5 Sahel countries are facing. Therefore, the G7 members intend to:

- Work with Sahel countries to strengthen their institutions, both at national and local levels and support their strategies and policies facilitating decent job creation in sustainable food systems informed by evidence and with youth engagement, accompanied by financing plans that include both public and private finance, as appropriate;
- Support regional institutions, strategies and policies for economic and political integration fostering decent jobs for youth through building sustainable food systems. In this regard, we notably support the ECOWAS Regional Support Strategy for Youth Employability in the Agro-Sylvo-Pastoral and Fisheries Sector", as well as "the Malabo Declaration on Accelerated Agricultural Growth and Transformation for Shared Prosperity and Improved Livelihoods"⁵ in order to create job opportunities for at least 30% of the young people in agricultural value chains by 2025;
- Encourage international organisations and financial institutions such as FAO, IFAD and WFP, to collaborate and take integrated regional approaches to their work in support to food systems in the Sahel, as well as to strengthen their efforts to promote and invest for rural youth employment in that context;
- Collaborate through existing international initiatives and mechanisms aimed at ensuring greater donor coordination and enabling structured dialogue, including the Sahel Alliance, the Sahel and West Africa Club at the OECD and the GAFSP, and share information and best practices on their ongoing projects to foster decent jobs creation for rural youth in the Sahel region in order to increase synergies on the ground;
- Continue to work on decent job creation measurement, considering related methodological challenges;
- Take into account ways in which rural youth employment can contribute to addressing security and stabilization issues in the region.

Renewed inclusive paradigms: sustainable food systems and territorial approaches

Developing sustainable food systems

Acknowledging the need to boost the inclusive rural transformation, the G7 members will support the development of sustainable food systems in the Sahel, including through local food value chains and sustainable agricultural practices. In this context, we recall the importance of sustainable management of natural resources as well as the land, water, food and energy nexus, and emphasize the need to address the different ways in which climate change and environment degradation affect territories, oceans and seas, activities and people. Making food systems resource-efficient, environmentally sustainable and resilient including to shocks and stresses is an opportunity for agricultural transformation, sustainable economic diversification and to minimize greenhouse gas emissions and other negative externalities of agriculture.

Sustainable food systems are crucial to ensure food security in all its dimensions and should take into account nutrition and food safety issues. Adopting a food systems approach to agri-food policies and investments makes it possible to seek economic, environmental and social sustainability simultaneously. Furthermore, given that the food economy represents 35% of GDP in the Sahel, the development of food systems will contribute to the structural transformation of Sahel economies and represents a considerable untapped potential for the creation of decent on-farm and off-farm jobs for rural youth. Food systems are rapidly growing across the region driven by the expansion of urban markets and changing consumer demand.

Therefore, when working with their Sahel partners, the G7 members intend to:

- Promote a sustainable food systems approach when addressing issues of governance, planning and implementation of policies and when investing in the agri-food sector; this will contribute to enhancing the coherence and coordination of agendas related to sustainable agriculture, livestock, water management, sanitation, rural and urban planning, energy, innovation, entrepreneurship, health, climate change and environment;

⁵ Adopted by the African Union's Heads of State and Government in June 2014

- Facilitate the involvement of young people in designing social and economic policies with paying particular attention for young women’s needs and the barriers they face, and promoting roles and job opportunities for them within food systems;
- Support and work through existing institutions and partnerships that enhance research, development and innovation and foster knowledge exchanges for sustainable food systems such as the DeSIRA initiative, the CGIAR Research Program on Climate Change, Agriculture and Food Security, the 4/1000 initiative and the Ouagadougou Declaration of African research centres in support of the Sahel Alliance;
- Promote innovation in sustainable food systems including tools to encourage youth entrepreneurship, start-ups and the use of ICT;
- Support proactive food security risk reduction and management as well as adaptation and recovery from shocks and stresses; this includes supporting efforts such as early warning and early recovery plans and systems;
- Scale up interventions to increase young smallholders’ productivity and incomes, including by applying sustainable agricultural practices, while ensuring sustainable food production and decent job creation.

Adopting territorial approaches to development

Referring to the UN-Habitat recommendations “Urban Rural Linkages: Guiding Principles and Framework for Action to advance integrated territorial planning”⁶ and the European Commission’s Task Force Rural Africa report, “An Africa-Europe agenda for rural transformation”⁷, the G7 members recognize that territorial approaches can be a powerful tool for improving development outcomes. Territories need to be attractive for youth, requiring a broad range of policies and factors related to employment, food security and nutrition as well as adequate provision of public goods and social services. Adopting territorial or place-based approaches means supporting and enabling governments and local authorities as well as local civil society to design together policies that are tailored to specific territorial challenges and ensure policy coherence while acknowledging limited capacities. Multi-sectoral and multi-stakeholder territorial approaches can address the complexity of ongoing structural economic, social and spatial transformations. They do not aim to contradict or diminish the fundamental importance of national institutions and investment priorities, nor to overrule sectorial policies or sector-specific interventions but rather to complement them to build functional territories.

Territorial approaches can also be instrumental in establishing sustainable food systems, benefiting stakeholders in both rural and urban areas. They can also contribute to reconciling agricultural and livestock practices and their spatial distribution and respective access to natural resources in the Sahel context where pastoralism has an important role and economic potential.

Therefore, when working with their Sahel partners, the G7 members intend to:

- Encourage national and local institutions and actors, including civil society and producers organisations, to promote active youth participation in the design and implementation of territorial development interventions and programmes;
- Support territorial development strategies that strengthen urban-rural linkages, create new economic opportunities, boost revenue and create decent jobs;
- Assist quality infrastructure projects in line with international standards such as the “G7 Ise-Shima Principles”, to increase connectivity between rural areas and growing urban areas, and improve market access and development (particularly for smallholder farmers) in secondary and tertiary cities;
- Work to renew and diversify analytical frameworks and methodological references, tools and indicators, such as spatial analysis, to make them better suited to territorial approaches.

Focus areas: opportunity and capability

Supporting opportunities for decent jobs creation

We recognize that an economically, politically, socially and institutionally conducive environment needs to be developed to create and preserve viable and decent jobs opportunities for youth in food systems, while improving existing ones. A large proportion of youth employment in the Sahel remains informal, particularly for young women. To respond to the youth bulge in the Sahel region and their entrance into the labour market in the next decade, there is a

⁶ *Urban-Rural Linkages to Advance Integrated Territorial Development: Guiding Principles and Framework for Action*, UN-Habitat, 2018

⁷ *An Africa-Europe agenda for rural transformation*, Task Force Rural Africa, 2018

need for greater job opportunities all along the agricultural and livestock value-chain within family farming, farmers organizations, youth associations and unions, upstream and downstream MSMEs and financing institutions for example. We acknowledge that in the Sahel region, rural youth employment may involve multiple activities, with complementary incomes stemming from both on-farm and off-farm activities in rural areas and nearby towns. While the vast majority of jobs must be created by the private sector, governments play a vital role in shaping the environment for responsible private investment and private sector development. In this context, special attention must be given to decent employment opportunities for youth. We remain mobilized to help G5 Sahel countries identify challenges that impede the development of a sustainable rural economy and decent job creation.

Therefore, and through sustainable food systems and territorial approaches to development, the G7 members intend to:

- Promote secure land tenure and equitable access to land for young people and women in particular in ODA programs, in line with the Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land, Fisheries and Forests in the Context of National Food Security (VGGT);
- Encourage private investors to align with the Principles for Responsible Investment in Agriculture and Food Systems (CFS-RAI), which include a dedicated principle on youth engagement;
- Strengthen support for family farmers who are central in the Sahel to eradicating hunger and achieving social cohesion, employment and sustainable management of natural resources, in line with the Decade of Family Farming (2019-2028); there is a need to improve the viability of family farms, including through better and more secure access to arable land, financial services, extension and advisory services, increased sustainable productivity, irrigation, markets and ICT, especially for young women;
- Support young agripreneurs and MSME development via better access to finance, assets, business development services, social protection schemes and vocational trainings, for example; simplify administrative procedures for businesses and establish stable regulatory environments for investment and trade. In accordance with the “Affirmative Finance Action for Women in Africa” (AFAWA) programme, young women entrepreneurs should be supported in particular;
- Support the diversification of livelihoods and foster promising on-farm and off-farm employment sectors such as: production and distribution of seeds and inputs; small-scale mechanization and irrigation development; technical assistance for animal health and food safety through the One Health approach; livestock, including small livestock, in addition to other opportunities along value-chains;
- Promote short-term labour opportunities through cash for work activities or highly labour-intensive utility public works that combine local employment and infrastructure projects such as sustainable resources management, safe water and sanitation, roads, energy and internet connectivity;
- Support policies and practices ensuring a safe working environment in the food economy for young women as well as promote their inclusion in local social and economic networks; help young women and men to work in areas or roles in the agricultural system not traditionally associated with their gender;
- Encourage and work with relevant international and bilateral finance institutions to address major investment risks in the agri-food sector in the Sahel region such as through the Platform for Agricultural Risk Management (PARM), and to contribute to the development of efficient and inclusive local financial systems that can support investments in a long-term perspective for sustainable impact.

Strengthening rural youth capabilities

We emphasize that there is great potential for youth to contribute to development, poverty eradication and food security, but realization of this potential is contingent on the capabilities provided, particularly an adequate, nutritious and healthy diet, education, women’s empowerment and gender equality. We emphasize the importance of an approach that builds the assets, skills, sense of agency, opportunities and enabling environment for youth.

Malnutrition compromises the physical and cognitive development of children and has lasting effects on young generations, hampering the progress of human development in Sahel countries. Nutrition therefore remains a priority for young people, especially in rural areas.

We acknowledge that the development of youth capabilities must be adapted to specific groups of young people, in particular: illiterate and innumerate rural youth, unschooled young people, adolescent women, youth from marginalized groups and young graduates. Skills development through formal educational systems from elementary to technical and vocational training, along with non-formal experiences, is critical. In contrast, child labour interferes with compulsory schooling and can damage children’s health and personal development. Child labour therefore needs to be eliminated.

Gender-sensitive and gender-specific actions are both required to support the capability of young rural women in the Sahel region to become entrepreneurs or to find quality employment. In this regard, the rights, education and health of girls and young women are of paramount importance and require investment.

Therefore, and through sustainable food systems and territorial approaches to development, the G7 members intend to:

- Support national education, agricultural and rural training strategies in G5 Sahel countries, particularly to develop large-scale skills development, to identify training that matches employment opportunities and youth aspirations. In this regard, we welcome the work of the Education - Development Ministerial meeting that specifically tackled skills development in sub-Saharan Africa through supporting gender-responsive education sector planning as well as technical and vocational education and training (TVET), calling for a renewed commitment and better coordination within the TVET sector, involving all stakeholders in Africa;
- Reiterate that an adequate, nutritious, safe and healthy diet at all stages of life, particularly during the 1,000-day window from pregnancy to age two and continuing through children's development up to age five, has a life-long positive impact; the G7 members are therefore willing to strengthen their support to nutrition services and multi-sectoral interventions for nutrition across the Sahel region;
- Encourage policies and programmes that create conducive conditions for young smallholder producers to gain the skills, technologies, financial and social protection instruments they need to be more competitive and earn incomes that improve young people's perception of agricultural and livestock professions; In this context, advisory services for the whole agri-food chain are particularly needed;
- Support gender-responsive approaches in agriculture that address the underlying conditions that limit women's access to factors of production, including finance, information and tenure of land; involvement in local decision-making processes, including participation in cooperatives and boards; ability to benefit from labour saving technologies.