

Foreword

A large rural youth population and a growing domestic demand for diversified foods in many developing countries represent a unique opportunity to advance towards the three objectives of decent job creation for youth, food security and sustainable production, as spelled out in Agenda 2030. Yet, challenges to seizing this opportunity remain. Across the developing world, rural youth are turning their backs on small-scale agriculture. The gap between rural youth job aspirations and the reality of the labour market is widening. Under-development in rural areas makes it difficult to tap into the potential for increasing and changing domestic consumption needs and providing young people with decent jobs and living standards.

This study places rural youth at the centre of the analysis. It aims to sharpen our understanding of who are the rural youth; what is the nature of their job aspirations; which untapped opportunities exist for them; what are youth-sensitive approaches within agricultural value chains; and what can policy makers do to create an enabling environment for decent and attractive jobs for rural youth. A key message is that integrating rural youth into productive and environmentally sustainable agri-food activities rooted in inclusive domestic food systems may well be one of the few lasting solutions to the current rural youth employment challenge. For this to happen, actions need to be taken today.

The findings contribute to the work of the OECD Development Centre on building more cohesive societies and helping countries to identify emerging issues and find innovative solutions to address social challenges. The research was undertaken as part of the Youth Inclusion Project, co-funded by the European Union, to provide evidence for the policy dialogue on youth well-being in developing and emerging countries. It is based on the harmonisation and analysis of data from 24 developing countries in Africa, Asia, Europe and Latin America, as well as a review of development projects aimed at integrating youth into local agricultural value chains.

This work adds to the policy dialogue on rural youth employment in three important ways: First, it constitutes an unprecedented effort to understand the multiple profiles of rural youth and their job aspirations. Second, it takes stock of current approaches to integrating rural youth, especially disadvantaged youth, into local agricultural value chains. Finally, it proposes a broad policy vision to harness the potential of rural youth through vibrant, sustainable and inclusive domestic food systems anchored in local value chains. We hope that this study will stimulate discussion among development stakeholders to bring about environmentally sustainable food systems that contribute to food security and work for the large number of rural youth in developing countries.

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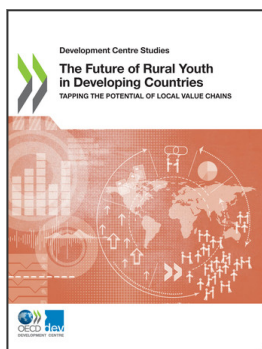
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