



**Brussels Rural Development Briefings**  
**A series of policy meetings on ACP-EU development issues**

**Briefing n° 24**

**Major drivers for rural transformation in Africa: Job creation for rural growth**

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**Youth, decent employment and the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme**

**Peter Wobst, Senior Economist, FAO**

*Executive Summary*

FAO leads international efforts to alleviate hunger and mitigate poverty and acts as an impartial forum where all nations meet as equals to negotiate agreements and debate policies. Achieving food security for all is at the heart of FAO's efforts, that is, to make sure people have sustained access to enough high-quality nutritive food to lead active, healthy lives. To this end, agriculture plays a pivotal role in the rural economy of most developing countries and support to rural youth and young farmers has been part of FAO's work for the last four decades. This has occurred in the form of strengthening and expanding young people's capacities, knowledge, and skills through education and training. FAO recognizes that the multidimensional issues facing young people in rural areas are interwoven but also recognizes that young people are well suited and keen to contribute to national economic development. In order to enable the rural youth to become active partners in the achievement of economic and social goals they must receive adequate support and access to resources that allow them to reach their maximum potentials.

Since 2005, the first Millennium Development Goal to "eradicate extreme poverty and hunger" includes target 1.B that encourages the achievement of "full and productive employment and decent work for all, including women and youth". This target acknowledges the centrality of employment promotion for the achievement of food security and poverty reduction. Today, some 300 million young people worldwide work for less than US\$2 a day. In rural areas, they are often employed in the informal sector for less than the minimum wage and are engaged in unpaid family work, especially in agriculture. Many rural youth are unable to reach their potential because of poverty, hunger, and poor health. Also, there are structural impediments and institutional deficiencies that come into play. For example, education and training in rural areas is often of poor quality and is irrelevant or inappropriate for the needs of rural youth and the demands of the labour market. Several studies have highlighted the importance of agricultural and rural development for economic growth and poverty reduction and rural youth can play a central role in this process. For one, they are open to new and innovative production techniques that will help raise agricultural productivity. They also tend to be more flexible when adjusting to new income generating activities that continue to become increasingly important in rural settings. Despite their potential, young people keep on facing several challenges in finding decent employment or work in the informal sector with bad pay, low job security and insufficient social protection. Underemployment, i.e. working below ones capacities in terms of time and skills or ability to generate a living wage, is also widespread among rural youth. Many jobs in the agricultural sector, for example, have a strong seasonal component, hence work might only be needed during certain times of the year.

FAO is fully engaged in supporting the implementation of the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP), the strategic agricultural framework of the African Union and the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD).

The national CAADP implementation process and the agriculture investment plans (AIPs) present an important instrument and opportunity to practically and concretely integrate objective and evidence-based mechanisms and programmes to address youth and decent employment in a gender sensitive manner.

Consultations with rural youth and their associations have been undertaken by FAO in the past couple of years while designing rural employment programmes for them and during the pre-AU Summit events held in Addis Ababa (1-6 April 2011). Youth representatives expressed their views and requests, as well as their wish to be actively involved in the contribution to the rural development of their countries and to be formally involved and included through the CAADP implementation programmes in the growth of their countries. It is further to the youth organizations' and their representatives' requests that the FAO and ILO are partnering with the NEPAD under the Rural Futures Programme and within the CAADP process. The partnership focuses on one major key challenge, namely how rural youth can access and benefit from decent employment opportunities and access markets.

The partnership aims to:

- Strengthen the capacity of partners in participating countries to analyze and address policy issues;
- Identify, test, and evaluate innovative policy, institutional, and programmes options to improve rural youth employment opportunities and access markets

Youth friendly training approaches potentially selected to be jointly initiated and integrated in the CAADP programmes from the FAO and the ILO and other stakeholders will be presented.