



Keys to mainstreaming the youth and intergenerational approach in the agriculture of the Americas

2026

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in the agriculture of the Americas

Prepared by [IICA](#)

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INDEX

I. INTRODUCTION.....	2
II. GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS FOR THE USE OF THIS GUIDE	5
III. THE YOUTH APPROACH FOR ASSERTIVE, EFFECTIVE, AND INCLUSIVE ACTION	9
IV. INTERNATIONAL REGULATORY FRAMEWORK ON YOUTH AND RURAL YOUTH	16
V. SHIFT IN THE VISION OF YOUTH: FROM A VULNERABILITY APPROACH TO POSITIONING YOUTH AS AGENTS OF CHANGE	22
VI. KEYS TO INCORPORATING A YOUTH APPROACH INTO COOPERATION ACTIONS AND EXPERIENCES IN THE AMERICAS	29
VII. KEYS FOR WORKING WITH RURAL YOUTH.....	48
VIII. CONTEXTS AND ENABLING ENVIRONMENTS FOR LIFE SKILLS AND THE PARTICIPATION OF RURAL YOUTH	71
IX. GUIDING QUESTIONS FOR MAINSTREAMING THE YOUTH APPROACH IN TECHNICAL COOPERATION	79
X. GLOSSARY	86
XI. BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	90



I. INTRODUCTION

I. INTRODUCTION

Participation and the creation of spaces for youth leadership have been increasing through local, regional, and global movements that address issues relevant to young people and society in terms of education, employment and employability, entrepreneurship, digitalization, and the environment.

Part of the shift toward the empowerment and leadership of young people focuses on challenging power structures that have historically marginalized and excluded youth voices, a situation that has been more pronounced in rural areas. This includes questioning policies and practices that leave young people out of decision-making processes while advocating for a more inclusive and participatory agriculture.

Young people must be encouraged to develop mechanisms of resilience and creative resistance in the face of the obstacles they encounter—whether structural, social, or personal—which are necessary to improve their economic, political, and sociocultural opportunities.

The Women and Rural Youth Program of the Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA) hopes that this document, *Keys to Mainstreaming the Youth and Intergenerational Approach in the Agriculture of the Americas*, will provide conceptual and methodological elements to inspire those who use it to take ownership of it and apply it in a creative and potentially innovative manner. In doing so, new experiences may be generated that renew existing theory based on the realities of rural youth, with new strategies for working with, for, and by them.

This proposal aims to serve as a guide to:

1. Recognize, analyze, and adopt a youth approach that adds value to and empowers the rural youth population to be an active part of agriculture with inclusion, equality, and opportunities for leadership within the framework of intergenerational initiatives.
2. Identify gaps and stereotypes regarding young people that hinder progress toward a more just and equitable agriculture.
3. Strengthen recognition of rural youth as rights holders with civic agency to participate in decision-making and in the development of public policies aligned with their needs and strategic interests.
4. Revisit key elements—such as territorial contexts, cultural diversity, ethnicity, and other characteristics that define the identity of rural youth—in order to generate effective opportunities for their personal and collective development, as well as for the continuity of economically viable and culturally relevant agriculture.



II. GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS FOR THE USE OF THIS GUIDE

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Who is it intended for?

This guide has been designed to support the efforts of managerial and technical staff of technical cooperation agencies, of the institutions working with the agricultural sector and with youth, as well as international, national, and local partner organizations. It is also aimed at different groups of organized young people interested in promoting, from a youth approach and an intergenerational perspective, the participation of the rural youth population in the agricultural sector.

What does this document contain?

At the beginning of this guide, the youth approach is addressed as a proposal under construction, as it is relatively recent. The analysis of rural youth is even more recent, despite decades of prior experience working with youth in rural settings.

A second section presents the global normative framework that provides a foundation for working with the youth approach, followed by a description of the evolution of approaches to youth over recent decades.

Subsequently, some key elements and examples are shared to facilitate the mainstreaming of this approach in public interventions in the agricultural sector. The following section proposes questions and guidance to direct attention toward the participation of rural youth, so that their capacity for agency and leadership is recognized and strengthened.

This conceptual and practical starting point will help ensure the incorporation of a key perspective in efforts to support rural youth in the Americas, securing their leadership in building their own development, autonomy, and life plans, which may be linked to agriculture from their cultural, age-specific, ethnic, and racial particularities, as well as from their geographic, economic, political, social, and environmental contexts.

How can this guide be used?

As its name indicates, this guide is a document that provides orientation rather than prescription, meaning that it is a working tool to understand rural youth as an active generation that is key to the sustainability of agriculture in the Americas.

The proposal seeks to generate reflections and experiences that contribute to enriching concepts, methodologies, and techniques. Those who use this guide may play a leading role in searching for and updating information, concepts, methodologies, and techniques that are useful for advancing the process of mainstreaming the youth approach in technical cooperation actions and in initiatives of various kinds, whether plans, policies, programs, or projects.

Although this guide is designed to promote and guide the mainstreaming of the youth approach in technical cooperation and institutional actions directed at this population, it gains significant value when used in initiatives that also include the adult population, as it will enable rural youth to influence strategic decisions, engage in dialogue and work with adults, and position their vision and leadership. While it is important to create dedicated spaces for rural youth, they must also participate as key agents in intergenerational dialogue and action.

IICA is moving toward a strong commitment to the youth approach from both a conceptual and instrumental positioning, in order to promote more strategic participation of rural youth in the technical cooperation actions that the Institute implements throughout the hemisphere.

Activity #1:

This activity may be carried out individually or collectively, whether in community, institutional, or public–private partnership settings.

Share your expectations regarding this guide.

At the end of your interaction with this material, you will have the opportunity to verify whether your expectations were met and to provide feedback to enrich this guide.



III. THE YOUTH APPROACH FOR ASSERTIVE, EFFECTIVE, AND INCLUSIVE ACTION

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Support entities that promote and facilitate spaces aimed at strengthening youth leadership and their organizations need to take ownership of the conceptual and methodological elements of the youth approach to ensure assertive, effective, and inclusive action.

This approach is a conceptual and methodological framework that places the interests and needs of rural youth at the center, recognizing them as active rights holders who, through their advocacy, leadership, and autonomy, can influence and contribute to the social, cultural, economic, and environmental development of society. It seeks to achieve a comprehensive understanding of youth, taking into account their diverse needs, identities, and contexts, while promoting a range of interventions that foster their empowerment and full and sustainable well-being (Pérez and García 2018).

Working with young people is an invitation to build a way of understanding and engaging with this population by recognizing them as rights holders with their own voice, promoting opportunities, actions, proposals, and initiatives that stem from their own realities and sociocultural, economic, and environmental contexts, in order to facilitate the conditions for full and sustainable development in rural areas (IICA 2023).

The youth approach is a work proposal, but also a political stance that seeks to move beyond the narratives of a society that reproduces stigmas, prejudices, and abuses of power which, in the case of youth, are expressed through adult-centrism and adultism (CPJ 2010). In this way, youth are viewed merely as a replacement generation, the generation of the future, denying them any possibility of exercising their rights as young people and of being protagonists of their life projects and of all development initiatives alongside adults.

Therefore, this approach is not only a work proposal, but also a way of viewing life, intergenerational relationships, and human realities in their diversity and specificity. It also makes it possible to recognize that young people are going through a stage of their life cycle that is of utmost importance for their individual and collective development, and that it is not merely a transition from childhood to adulthood.

However, in rural areas many young people are exposed to conditions that place them in situations of greater vulnerability, such as poverty, discrimination, limited or no access to formal education, irregular migration status, and intra-family, institutional, and patrimonial violence, among others, as well as constraints related to land tenure, financing, connectivity, etc., which reduce their opportunities to build an autonomous life project and develop their leadership.

The youth approach recognizes the existence of young people in conditions of exclusion who require differentiated processes aimed at facilitating their recognition and leadership in society and at guaranteeing the fulfillment and exercise of irrevocable, inalienable, and indivisible

rights. Responding to these specific realities—particularly those of young people in vulnerable situations—requires relevant strategies.

Promoting the participation of rural youth means challenging stereotypes and fostering a more inclusive environment where the potential and capacities of all people are recognized, regardless of age, thereby strengthening their self-esteem, confidence, and capacity to influence policies and decision-making spaces (IICA 2023).

In defining the present of young people, it is important to invest in strengthening their capacities and values, as well as in building identities and life plans aligned with their geographic, cultural, social, economic, and environmental contexts. A holistic perspective for working with rural youth is essential to transform power relations and critical constraints that often overshadow the potential of young people to fulfill their aspirations, goals, and life plans.

The Women and Rural Youth Program of IICA also promotes the intergenerational approach, understood as a way “to integrate experiences and knowledge among different generations to create a horizontal dynamic that reduces existing gaps and contributes to the creation of spaces for participation for all people.” It incorporates the youth perspective as a frame of reference for positioning young people. It recognizes that youth are not a replacement generation, but rather a population with rights, needs and demands, visions, and proposals that must be present on the global agenda” (IICA 2023).

This intergenerational approach promotes interaction among different generations with the aim of improving social relations, giving value and recognition to the experience and

knowledge of both young people and adults, and thereby fostering dialogue and inter-learning action. All of this contributes to building more dialogical, horizontal, and empathetic relationships that transcend authoritarian power dynamics. This approach seeks to leverage the strengths of each generation and enhance benefits at both the individual and collective levels.

Complementary to the youth approach is the approach of leadership and autonomy, which promotes the recognition of young people based on their capacities, skills, and potential for their own development through the promotion of active, positive, and leading roles. The life cycle they are going through presents the challenge of achieving autonomy and connecting with other young people who can strengthen their capacities and positive identities and provide pride, a sense of belonging, knowledge, and skills to face life.

The following box summarizes some of the main inequalities and exclusions faced by youth in the Americas, reinforcing the importance of promoting new policies with youth and intergenerational approaches that incorporate youth as agents of change and translate into strategic actions to improve the conditions of rural youth and their participation in agrifood systems.

FIGURES THAT CONFIRM INEQUALITIES AND EXCLUSIONS

According to FAO (2023), rural youth face obstacles in accessing quality education, as only 44% complete secondary school, compared with 63% in urban areas. The gap widens in higher education, with only 10% accessing university studies, compared with 30% of young people in urban areas.

According to ECLAC (2022), nearly 40% of the rural youth population in Latin America lives in extreme poverty, which is compounded by limited access to formal employment. In most cases, young people are forced to work in informal agricultural activities, affecting their economic stability and professional development.

Regarding migration, ILO (2021) reveals that 23% of young people in rural areas migrate to urban areas in search of better education and employment opportunities.

Significant inequalities are also evident in the use of and access to digital technologies. According to a World Bank report (2022), only 35% of rural youth in Latin America have access to the internet in their homes, limiting opportunities associated with technology and online education, an option of great importance for young people in rural areas, where adequate and accessible infrastructure is not always available.

Half of young people aged 13 to 25 are not connected, and this figure is even higher in rural areas, where only 43.4% have access to meaningful connectivity services (Ruiz 2024). According to data compiled by IICA, the University of Oxford, the IDB, and IFAD (n.d.:22),

“in Latin America and the Caribbean, around 72 million inhabitants of rural areas do not have access to connectivity meeting minimum quality standards.”

Insight #1:

Are you familiar with the situation of rural youth in the countries or regions where you carry out your work?

Have you considered which elements differentiate them from adults?



IV. INTERNATIONAL REGULATORY FRAMEWORK ON YOUTH AND RURAL YOUTH

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This section presents the international normative framework on youth, which has advanced through various instruments outlined below. It is important to note that there is no specific normative framework for rural youth in Latin America and the Caribbean, and efforts are being made within agricultural policies to incorporate the rural youth perspective in some countries.

These global frameworks and declarations applicable to the States of the Americas include principles of action and rights established by the United Nations (UN), the International Labour Organization (ILO), among others.

One of the first instruments was the **Declaration on the Rights of Youth in 1995**, adopted by the UN General Assembly, which recognizes fundamental rights such as education, health, employment, and participation. This positioning emphasizes the need for leadership and active participation of young people in the development of their communities and in decision-making processes that affect their future.

The **UN World Programme of Action for Youth** may also be mentioned, which aims to ensure that young people have access to the resources necessary to achieve their full potential. Within this framework, quality education, training in hard and soft skills for employment and

employability, as well as participation in politics and public decision-making, are considered essential. It also addresses protection against violence and exploitation (United Nations 2014).

The **Youth Action Plan** developed within the framework of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) is also noteworthy, as it highlights the need to improve educational, cultural, and comprehensive development opportunities for youth in rural contexts, especially those in highly vulnerable situations, and underscores the importance of promoting youth participation in political, civic, and sociocultural life—key factors for empowerment and influence in public policy.

Regarding the positioning of rural youth within global normative frameworks, the **FAO Rural Youth Action Plan** can be cited, which addresses the importance of job creation, access to technology, training, and the development of agricultural techniques and skills, as well as participation in decision-making on rural development (FAO 2020).

The **Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration of the United Nations** may also be highlighted, a topic that directly or indirectly affects rural youth who, due to various circumstances, are compelled to migrate from rural to urban areas in search of better opportunities. This instrument seeks to promote inclusive policies that protect the rights of migrants, including rural youth.

ILO Recommendation No. 193 also refers to the promotion of employment and employability policies that consider the needs and strategic interests of youth in rural areas. It emphasizes access to decent and dignified employment, as well as specialized technical training in rural assets reflected in enterprises adapted to rural contexts.

In 2023, the Organization of American States (OAS) declared the **Inter-American Decade for the Rights of All Women, Adolescent Girls, and Girls in Rural Settings of the Americas, 2024–2034**. This declaration seeks to promote the advancement of their rights and eradicate the discrimination they face, as well as to ensure that young rural women have a voice, participate in decision-making and public policies, and have access to resources and opportunities (OAS 2023).

Youth Entities

Within this framework of efforts to support youth rights, organizations—both intergovernmental and from civil society and youth groups—also stand out, seeking to come together, organize, and exert greater influence in the concrete implementation of what is established in conventions, pacts, and agreements.

One of these is the **International Youth Organization (IYO)**, a platform of organizations and networks that bring together and defend the interests of young people from different parts of the world, advocating for the fulfillment of rights in education, employment, political participation, and social inclusion. Rural youth are key actors in promoting policies that foster development.

The **International Youth Council (IYC)** may also be mentioned, another global platform that brings together youth organizations and focuses on promoting rights, peace education, the environment, and employment. Its purpose is to act as an interlocutor between youth, governments, and international institutions.

Also included in this mapping is the **World Youth Organization (WYO)**, an international network that works on projects promoting youth empowerment and participation in democratic processes and sustainable development. It has created spaces for young people to engage in global forums and conferences to share experiences, promote international cooperation, and work on initiatives to safeguard their rights.

Within the framework of the **Summit of the Americas**—the main forum bringing together Heads of State and Government of the countries of the Americas, created in 1994 to discuss and agree on solutions to common political, economic, social, and environmental challenges—IICA and the Young Americas Business Trust (YABT) have organized two meetings with youth from Latin America and the Caribbean. In these meetings, youth have developed proposals to be shared at the **VII Young Americas Forum**, from which a youth declaration addressed to the Heads of the Summit of the Americas will emerge, in a process led by YABT.

At the global level, FAO supports the **Youth Assembly of the World Food Forum (WFF)**, a structured space for young people to influence decision-making in agrifood systems worldwide. It is a platform led by youth from the Americas alongside those from other regions of the world, from which a global declaration of rural youth emerges.

All of these normative frameworks and youth initiatives seek to recognize and address the specific challenges they face in their diverse geographic, sociocultural, political, economic, and environmental contexts, both to inform public policy and to implement actions that safeguard the rights and duties of rural youth.

Activity #2:

We encourage you to:

- a.** Review the interventions developed by the Institute and analyze the normative framework that has supported them.
- b.** For ministerial teams, review national and institutional regulations in order to propose the mainstreaming of the youth approach.
- c.** For both teams, identify the definitions of youth currently being used.



V. SHIFT IN THE VISION OF
YOUTH: FROM A VULNERABILITY
APPROACH TO POSITIONING
YOUTH AS AGENTS OF CHANGE

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The purpose of this chapter is to present the evolution of youth approaches in development, moving from a vision of dependency and vulnerability to one of leadership and conscious action. This transformation entails a reconfiguration in two directions: (a) how youth see themselves and (b) how they are perceived by institutions and society at large.

Historically, youth and sustainable human development approaches have undergone conceptual and methodological changes that have shaped the way youth are understood.

1. Traditional approach to youth in the nineteenth century

During this period, youth were perceived as vulnerable and dependent, mainly from a perspective of transition to adulthood, marked by their incorporation into formal education and social integration that prepared them for life (Sepúlveda, 2013). Theoretical and philosophical traditions considered young people as in the process of becoming adults and, within this transition, they were regarded as incapable of expressing opinions, making decisions, and actively participating in decisions affecting their environment. They were seen as recipients of the socialization and control exercised over them by adults.

2. Emergence of youth movements demanding greater participation in decision-making in the twentieth century

In the 1960s and 1970s, young people actively joined social movements and their own struggles for the vindication of rights; they stood out alongside other civil rights and feminist movements (CLACSO, 2013). However, youth continued to be regarded as a social problem in terms of delinquency, unemployment, and rebelliousness, among others, which led to policies aimed at “correcting,” “educating,” and “training” young people through a top-down approach.

3. Youth and sustainable human development in the 1980s and 1990s

This period marked the beginning of a conception of youth as human rights holders, and young people began to be perceived not only as recipients of policies but also as agents of change with the capacity to influence and shape society. At the same time, the concept of human development gained prominence, particularly in the Brundtland Report (1987) of the World Commission on Environment and Development, which introduced the idea of development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the needs of future generations, emphasizing economic, social, and environmental sustainability.

4. Approach of leadership, autonomy, and substantive participation in the twenty-first century

In recent decades, there has been progress toward a holistic approach that recognizes youth as an integral part of development, placing emphasis on their participation in influencing decision-making processes. The World Programme of Action for Youth and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development plays a key role in building more just, equitable, and sustainable

societies. Under this approach, young people are conceived not only as a future workforce but as active citizens who must have equitable access to educational, labor, social, and cultural opportunities.

IICA is committed to this latter approach, which recognizes rural youth as agents of change in agriculture in the Americas, as they are a present generation, a life stage in itself and not merely a transition to adulthood; moreover, they possess the capacities and knowledge to influence the changes and transformations required for agriculture to become a source of development for rural populations and to address future challenges related to food demand and environmental change.

Activity #3:

This is a fitting moment to reflect on:

- a.** What has been the emphasis of the youth approach in the technical cooperation actions and all initiatives of your institution developed for, by, and with rural youth in the Americas?
- b.** What has been the emphasis of the youth approach applied by your institution or organization in the formulation and implementation of policies for, by, and with rural youth in the Americas?

As noted above, the youth approach in public policies has evolved from invisibility to active participation in decision-making within youth and intergenerational spaces. The following table presents a comparison between the dependency and vulnerability approach and the leadership, autonomy, and participation approach.

Table 1. Comparison between youth approaches.

Dependence and vulnerability approach	Agency, autonomy and participation approach
FOCUS	
Perceives young people as having limited or no capacities and skills to participate in and manage their own lives.	Focuses attention on young people as capable of influencing their contexts, recognizing them as agents of change and fostering new ways of approaching development.
WORK METHODOLOGIES	
Top-down actions that nullify any power of participation and influence.	Participatory methodologies for empowerment and transforming power relations.
PROBLEM	
Stereotypes and traditional roles that limit them and confine them to transitional spaces.	Limited legal, cultural, social and individual tools for change.

STRATEGIES	
Promotion of activities, projects and initiatives designed by adults for young people.	Promotion of autonomy, empowerment and decision-making based on the needs and strategic interests of rural youth.

Source Prepared by author.

Insight #2:

- a. Have you ever thought about what a 20-year-old person was like in 1900 and what a 20-year-old is like in 2024?
- b. Could it be that perceptions about age ranges change over time and depending on the context?
- c. Does a young person living in the city face the same realities as one living in a rural area? And does the latter experience different situations from those of an Indigenous young person?

Approaches have evolved over time and often overlap. Some projects still emphasize vertical and adult-centered perspectives, but it is necessary to move forward and explore other ways of driving real change to improve the quality of life of rural youth within their learning and development contexts.

Activity #4:

We invite you to answer the following questions:

- a.** What aspects could you improve in your work to introduce and consolidate an agency-, autonomy- and participation-based approach for rural youth?
- b.** Could you list at least three of them?



VI. KEYS TO INCORPORATING A
YOUTH APPROACH INTO
COOPERATION ACTIONS AND
EXPERIENCES IN THE AMERICAS

VI. KEYS TO INCORPORATING A YOUTH APPROACH INTO COOPERATION ACTIONS AND EXPERIENCES IN THE AMERICAS

Based on the approaches outlined above, a series of concrete keys emerge that can be taken into account when learning about, designing, implementing and following up on initiatives with a youth approach. This should not overlook the fact that rural youth must be part of that process.

Most rural youth have the skills to lead—if enabling conditions are in place—initiatives that improve the social, educational, economic and environmental conditions of rural territories and their countries as a whole. Therefore, it is important to promote their participation rather than their inclusion, first because they are already part of agriculture in the Americas, and second because their contributions are often not recognized, particularly as the living conditions they face do not always guarantee them a leading role or the possibility of securing a life plan that provides autonomy and decision-making capacity.

Five concrete cases or experiences of work by, for and with rural youth are presented below. From practice, they contribute concepts, methodologies and strategies for coordination among institutions, sectors and thematic areas.

These cases will enable the contents of the other sections of the guide to have reference points that facilitate visualization of the youth approach in specific actions, as well as its incorporation into daily work.

In both this Section VI and Section VII, you will find references to these cases in order to facilitate the articulation of concepts with the experiences shared here.

These experiences are promoted by various institutions and, although IICA does not participate in all of them, they are highly valuable, as they make it possible to identify approaches consistent with a rural youth perspective. At the end of the section on each experience, a link is provided directing readers to more detailed information on these positive experiences of work by, for and with rural youth in the Americas. In addition, references for each experience are included at the end of this guide.

At the end of the review of these experiences with rural youth, you will find an activity that identifies the key elements of these experiences for your work on, for and with rural youth.

- **CASE #1 - Youth Farm Program in Barbados**

What is this initiative about and what is its purpose?

The Youth in Agriculture Program seeks to strengthen the capacities of rural youth to apply sustainable agricultural practices through technology and innovation. This initiative is implemented in the Caribbean from a regional perspective, as Barbados receives young people from other countries in the region who are interested in training at the program's youth farms.

Its purpose is to promote training, research, design, and application of innovative agricultural technologies and practices needed to support sector development and increase national and regional food production. It aims to transform agriculture through technology and innovation

by empowering rural youth to learn, develop, and apply technologies and good practices, making agriculture an activity that contributes to food security and to improving the quality of life of young people and their families.

Who is the program intended for?

The program is aimed at young women and men from Barbados and other Caribbean countries who, in addition to finding opportunities in this activity to develop their life projects, contribute to reducing the agricultural import bill in that country.

Who promotes it?

This initiative is characterized by a significant interinstitutional contribution through public–private partnerships. The Ministry of Agriculture and Food and Nutrition Security (MAFNS) provides financial support to the program and grants access to facilities for training sessions, as well as technical support from its expert staff. The Ministry of Technical and Vocational Education and Training also contributes to the Youth Farm with a portion of its annual budget, together with Barbados TVET. The Institute provides technical and logistical support for the integration of young people into the Youth Farm. Finally, the Barbados Technical and Vocational Education and Training Council (TVET Council) provides certification in the training areas and funding for the assessment of candidates to the Youth in Agriculture Program.

What is the strategic approach in the implementation of the program?

The vocational program includes four food production systems in which young people may participate: Crop Production, Livestock Rearing, Aquaculture, and Agricultural Production. Youth entering the program must complete an intensive eight-week training plan focused on diversified vegetable cultivation and the production of meat and fish for local markets. At the end of the course, they obtain an N/CVQ certification, which assesses the competence of rural youth (skills, knowledge, and understanding) in agricultural work settings, certifying their ability to perform in these areas.

What methodological tools has the YOUTH Farm implemented?

The Program is based on the “learning by doing” methodology, with a strong fieldwork component and recognizing young people as protagonists of their own development. This methodology, used by the IICA Office in Barbados and its partners, is highly effective with young people, as it is horizontal and promotes inter-learning among all participants. In this context, the Office has established demonstration facilities for the Youth in Agriculture Program in secondary schools, as well as crop and livestock stations under the supervision of the Ministry of Agriculture, enabling broad outreach to encourage young people to connect with agriculture. This methodology offers rural youth a wide range of possibilities, allowing them to define the areas in which they may wish to work upon completion of their studies.

To establish a youth demonstration farm in a particular school, technical staff are contacted and the conditions for setting up the farm are assessed. In addition, students from the Ann Hill School for persons with disabilities are included in the program each year. Information about

the youth farm is also shared through the website and social media to promote it among the youth population.

In implementing the program, it is essential to secure the commitment of donors and the certifying body, ensure adequate infrastructure, and carry out a training-of-trainers process for the transmission and construction of knowledge.

What have been some results and challenges of the Youth Farm Program?

The program has provided training and certification to more than 300 young people since its creation in 2012. An important achievement is that participating youth have obtained certification in various aspects of agricultural production.

Subsequently, employers who hire these rural youth recognize the value of the program. In addition, other agricultural enterprises prioritize hiring young people who have graduated from the Youth Farm, enabling them to access employment on farms or in agricultural businesses. To date, graduates of the Program work on various farms or have established their own enterprises, allowing them to expand and apply their knowledge. A key challenge identified is the need to mobilize external resources and strengthen partnerships with the private sector.

More information about this experience is available at the following link:

<https://www.iicabarbadosyouthfarmprogram.com/>

- **CASE #2 - PedAgroeco experience, Brazil**

What is this initiative about and what is its purpose?

It is an initiative aimed at promoting agroecology linked to participatory education, with the objective of strengthening sustainable agricultural production, food sovereignty, and the leadership participation of rural youth. It is directed at rural young people seeking options to address the socioeconomic and environmental challenges currently faced in rural areas.

Who is the PedAgroeco initiative aimed at?

It focuses on young people who are part of family farming and are willing to experiment with a type of agriculture that challenges traditional and conventional models.

Who promotes it?

PedAgroeco is an experience promoted by international cooperation networks in partnership with social organizations and peasant movements in Brazil interested in agroecology, popular education, and food sovereignty. One of the actors is the Landless Rural Workers' Movement (MST), which advocates for agrarian reform and agroecology as an alternative to conventional agriculture. Another NGO is the Paulo Freire Association, which actively participates in initiatives that combine local knowledge with scientific expertise, such as agroecology. Local and state governments also participate, with support from the Brazilian Agricultural Research Corporation (EMBRAPA), a federal entity of the Brazilian Government. The United Nations, through FAO, also provides resources as part of development cooperation efforts.

What is the strategic approach in the implementation of PedAgroeco?

The approach centers on promoting agroecology as a model that fosters environmental stewardship and the sustainable use of biodiversity through training and the strengthening of youth autonomy and their contributions to food security. This is carried out through innovative forms of marketing and local and regional distribution chains for less industrialized and more environmentally sustainable agricultural products.

What methodological tools have been implemented in PedAgroeco?

It is based on popular and participatory education, whose principles—such as active participation, dialogue, critical reflection, social transformation, enjoyment, and creativity—are embedded in experiences that contextualize work with rural youth, positioning them as agents of change. A valuable and innovative aspect is the way the needs and interests of rural youth are identified, through a silent walk around the community together with people from other age groups, followed by the exchange of observations in an intergenerational dialogue that values and prioritizes the youth perspective when planning actions to be undertaken. Once young people and adults have shared their interests and needs, these are integrated into a common proposal.

Another important feature is the combination of traditional and local knowledge with scientific and technical expertise, from a participatory and multidisciplinary approach. Agroecology is valued as a transformative practice that employs cultivation techniques without agrochemicals, soil conservation, and sustainable ecosystem management.

The formation of networks stands out as another intergenerational collaboration tool through which young people and adults can support each other in product marketing and in building common strategies to address rural challenges.

What have been some results and challenges of PedAgroeco?

Progress has been identified in improving agricultural production, as agroecological practices have enhanced land productivity, reduced dependence on external inputs, and promoted crop diversity and soil health. Young people are also more aware that these practices improve food security and environmental health. They have taken leadership roles in building solidarity marketing networks, enabling access to fairer markets and better income derived from product quality. Another achievement has been a stronger appropriation of their rural identity, revaluing traditional knowledge and environmental stewardship as part of their culture.

Regarding challenges, some communities face obstacles in accessing the resources required for large-scale agroecological practices. In addition, agroecological products are not always consumed by populations that sometimes opt for cheaper products resulting from industrial processes or less sustainable techniques.

More information about this experience is available at the following link:

<https://www.embrapa.br/busca-de-noticias/-/noticia/37229672/projeto-busca-fortalecer-protagonismo-da-juventude-rural>

- **CASE #3 - Circular economy experience in rural areas, Cundinamarca, Colombia**

What is this initiative about and what is its purpose?

Cundinamarca is one of the departments characterized by agricultural production in Colombia, where crops such as coffee, flowers, vegetables, and sugarcane, among others, stand out. It is also one of the most important regions for community-based rural agricultural tourism activities.

As part of innovation efforts, circular economy practices linked to agriculture are being implemented, characterized by the four “Rs”: reduce, reuse, recycle, and recover materials and resources for the sustainable management of inputs used in the agricultural sector.

This model is being applied by young people in the agricultural sector, including the use of agricultural waste, the implementation of cleaner production practices, and the generation of added value through the transformation of agricultural byproducts.

Who is it intended for?

It is directed at families engaged in family farming who are innovating through the reuse of agricultural and livestock byproducts to maximize and enhance available resources. These families include rural youth who demonstrate a strong commitment to agriculture, livestock production, and sustainability in these activities.

Who promotes it?

The Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development of Colombia, through the Sustainable Agriculture Program, as well as the Ministry of Environment and Sustainable Development,

which has a National Circular Economy Policy focused on productive sectors and rural areas. The United Nations contributes technical expertise, financing, and support for the creation of collaboration networks to advance this line of work in rural areas.

What is the strategic approach in the implementation of this experience?

The initiative seeks to strengthen the capacities of rural youth so that they lead innovation in the agricultural and agro-industrial sectors, adopting new technologies and seeking solutions to current economic, social, and environmental challenges. Circular economy practices in Cundinamarca transform agricultural waste into useful inputs such as biofertilizers and biogas, through accessible techniques such as composting and vermiculture, without requiring major investments. This strategy is essential to reducing the ecological footprint, lowering greenhouse gas emissions, and promoting biodiversity regeneration, demonstrating that creativity and local-scale implementation are pillars of sustainable agriculture.

What methodological tools have been implemented?

Several young people are collaborating with agro-industrial companies to apply circular economy models, and the project emphasizes training, capacity strengthening, and the establishment of strategic partnerships.

The participation of rural youth in regenerative agriculture projects and in the use of digital technologies, such as drones and sensors to monitor crops and agricultural waste, is innovative, as it recognizes the potential of young people in managing technologies and acting as agents of change in agriculture. This focus on youth also contributes to optimizing water management through infrastructure and smart systems that reduce waste in agricultural production,

representing a good practice when developed with rural youth, as it acknowledges the key role they play in implementing productive projects that generate income while contributing to environmental sustainability. Although agrifood digitalization has been gaining momentum in the Americas among the adult population, a project specifically directed at rural youth demonstrates a commitment to generational integration.

What have been some results and challenges?

Young people involved in the project have made progress in composting and organic fertilization practices (crop residues, stems, leaves, tree seeds, and others), which help improve soil quality and reduce dependence on agrochemicals and other industrial fertilizers. Crop residues and manure have also been used to generate biogas for on-farm use or commercialization.

More information about this experience is available at the following link:
<https://www.facebook.com/redepedagroeco>

- **CASE #4 - Digital Harvest: Precision Agriculture Experience, Mexico**

What is this initiative about and what is its purpose?

Cosecha Digital is an initiative founded in 2019 and implemented in Michoacán, Mexico. Its objective is to promote the transformation of agriculture through the use of digital technologies in order to improve productivity and the commercialization of agricultural

products. It is committed to sustainability and good practices so that, through proper biodiversity management, it is possible to address environmental challenges and promote the responsible use of natural resources.

Who is it intended for?

This initiative is specifically directed at rural youth interested in receiving training and digital tools to improve their agricultural practices and connect directly with markets.

Who promotes it?

Cosecha Digital receives support from the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development (SADER) and various organizations such as the Michoacán Foundation, which provides collaboration in training and financing so that more young people may benefit from the initiative.

What is the strategic approach in its implementation?

It is based on the premise that conscious and ethical access to technology and artificial intelligence in agriculture can enable greater efficiency and effectiveness in harvesting and marketing agricultural products. It considers the following:

- Technological training. This involves instruction in the use of mobile technologies and applications that allow young people to monitor crops, manage available resources, and thereby optimize harvests.

- Connection with markets and other strategic partners. The purpose is to facilitate access to e-commerce platforms that enable rural youth to offer their products directly to consumers or distributors, eliminating intermediaries and increasing their earnings.

What methodological tools have been implemented?

Cosecha Digital works with participatory methodologies that build on the experience of each participant, generating reflection and learning according to each cultural and geographic context, which makes it highly relevant for youth, as it moves beyond the traditional view of teaching as a vertical, top-down process that does not consider the experiences and interests of rural youth.

This methodology is used in both virtual and in-person training spaces. It is grounded in the understanding that adopting precision agriculture technologies, such as crop-monitoring sensors and digital harvest management systems, enables young people to become more efficient and competitive in placing their products on the market and to derive greater benefits from their activity.

What have been some results and challenges?

Rural youth have learned to properly manage technology for crop management, pest control, weather forecasting, and efficient cultivation techniques. One of the main achievements has been the consolidation of the Marketing Network, which provides links with buyers and companies purchasing grains, fruits, and other products, thus facilitating access to broader markets.

Rural youth participating in this initiative are transferring technology to adults, who are also learning about digital agriculture and beginning to apply this knowledge. This represents a strong example of generational integration in practice, with tangible results in increased productivity and improved marketing opportunities.

One of the challenges is to continue strengthening the social and economic inclusion component for rural youth, while also fostering empowerment and the development of soft skills that will enable them to work better as a team, expand their leadership, and continue innovating in agriculture. Another challenge is to increasingly integrate young women in rural areas who are interested in making agriculture and technology a key and present combination in the life plans of both women and men in their rural contexts.

More information about this experience is available at the following link:
<https://agriculture.basf.com/mx/es/sustentabilidad/agricultura-digital>

- **CASE #5 - National Youth Inclusion Program (PROJOVEM), Brazil**

What is this initiative about and what is its purpose?

It is an initiative of the Government of Brazil whose implementation began in 2005 with the objective of promoting social inclusion and improving opportunities for young people in situations of social vulnerability, by strengthening strategies for access to training for first employment and compliance with labor market regulations that favor youth insertion into decent work.

Who is PROJOVEM aimed at?

This program is directed at young people between 15 and 29 years of age who have not completed basic education and face obstacles in accessing quality employment in the labor market. A noteworthy aspect of this program is that over time it has formulated and adapted specific strategies for rural youth and urban youth, which helps ensure better results and sustainability.

Who promotes it?

The General Secretariat of the Presidency of Brazil promote this initiative through the National Youth Secretariat, and by the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), United Nations.

What is the strategic approach in its implementation?

The approach integrates the completion of primary and secondary education with vocational training oriented toward economic and social development, and encourages youth participation in their communities. The strategic pillars of the program are:

- PROJOVEM TRABALHADOR, which provides training to young people between 18 and 29 years of age who are unemployed and earn below the minimum wage.
- PROJOVEM CAMPO, for youth between 18 and 29 years of age who have not completed secondary education and require financial support to continue their studies, along with support for entrepreneurship linked to agricultural activities adapted to their rural contexts.

- PROJOVEM URBANO, similar to the previous one, but adapted to employability and entrepreneurship needs in urban contexts.
- PROJOVEM ADOLESCENTE, for young people between 15 and 17 years of age who benefit from a cash transfer through Bolsa Família and receive educational support.

These programs aim to close gaps in access to opportunities for young people in vulnerable situations and to strengthen the link between education and employment.

What methodological tools have been implemented?

PROJOVEM works with a participatory methodology and an interdisciplinary, community-based approach in order to align its actions with the realities of young people in their specific contexts.

With the objective of linking soft skills and technical skills, a series of steps are implemented, described below, which constitute the methodological foundation of the program:

Step one: Returning to school. If a young person has not completed school, they are integrated into an accelerated education program based on dynamic and meaningful learning techniques, using content connected to the realities of young people in rural or urban contexts. In other words, learning is linked to their social, cultural, and economic realities.

Step two: Vocational/professional training (hard skills). This includes training in skills and competencies for employability according to local labor market needs, ranging from technology-related careers to others that value trades and traditional knowledge. This professional training is complemented by internships in companies and institutions, enabling

young people to gain experience and become more competitive in the labor market. Employment intermediation services and cash transfers are provided to support attendance in vocational training courses.

Step three: Development of socioemotional competencies (soft skills). The program integrates training in life skills such as youth leadership (individual and collective), empowerment of young women, elimination of stereotypes, self-confidence, conflict resolution, and citizenship, among others.

Step four: Follow-up of productive projects in rural and urban areas. Through interdisciplinary teams, young people receive support to apply the academic knowledge acquired in their productive projects. The success of the program is due to individual and collective follow-up that includes counseling and psychological and social support, ensuring accompaniment and guidance to overcome personal and contextual obstacles. This is complemented by career guidance services for the creation of entrepreneurial initiatives.

What have been some results and challenges of PROJOVEM?

Progress has been observed in terms of social, educational, and labor participation. School enrollment rates have increased, with significant reductions in dropout rates, particularly in rural and peripheral areas. Support networks have also been created among participants and the technical teams providing mentoring and training, offering spaces for guidance and support. However, one of the challenges is expanding to many other remote rural areas that the program has not yet reached.

According to the information reviewed, it is necessary to improve the program's targeting with respect to young women and men, as well as its evaluation and monitoring systems, in order to achieve more precise measurements of the program's medium- and long-term impacts on the quality of life of participating youth. This experience contributes an important element for youth: training for first employment, one of the barriers they face in the economic sphere and in achieving autonomy.

More information about this experience is available at the following link:
<https://www.gov.br/trabalho-e-emprego/pt-br/noticias-e-conteudo/2024/Maio/projovem-trabalhador-e-relancado-pelo-ministerio-do-trabalho-e-emprego>

Activity #5:

Please identify the following relevant aspects in these experiences developed with rural youth in different countries of the Americas that may be replicated in your workplace:

Youth participation	
Work methodologies	
Technologies in agriculture	
Institutional alliances	
Main results	
Challenges addressed	



VII. KEYS FOR WORKING WITH RURAL YOUTH

VII. KEYS FOR WORKING WITH RURAL YOUTH

All these concrete experiences enrich this guide and, in particular, can strengthen the work with youth carried out by all entities in the agricultural sector of the Americas. To further develop tools related to the youth approach, several **key elements for working with rural youth** are proposed.

These keys are framed within the process of assessment, planning, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation. They are therefore structured as follows:

From understanding their reality, which includes the assessment key with a youth approach.

From the formulation of technical cooperation actions, incorporating the participatory formulation key with a youth approach.

From the implementation of technical cooperation actions, which encompasses several fundamental keys to be incorporated into interventions, corresponding to the practical and strategic needs of youth, such as capacity strengthening, youth empowerment and leadership; access to opportunities for rural youth in agriculture; access to employment and decent work; strengthening of organization, networks, and communication; citizenship and participation in the development of public policies for agriculture in the Americas; and, last but not least, technological innovation as a tool for youth leadership in agriculture.

From monitoring and evaluation, which develops the key related to safe spaces for reflection on achievements, obstacles, and lessons learned from working with young people.

The following sections elaborate on these keys:

FROM UNDERSTANDING THE REALITY OF RURAL YOUTH

KEY 1. ASSESSMENT: IDENTIFYING WHERE YOUNG PEOPLE ENGAGED IN AGRICULTURE ARE AND WHO THEY ARE

This approach must begin by recognizing that rural youth constitute a population group with highly diverse particularities and characteristics that should not be conceived in a homogeneous or generalized manner. Therefore, it is essential to speak of young people rather than unify these individualities under the concept of youth.

In practical work, what elements should be considered under this key?

- It is necessary to design creative ways to understand the reality of young people in their contexts, taking into account data disaggregated by sex; geographic, cultural, and ethnic-racial context; life cycle; education; migration status; violence or discrimination; and access to financial and productive resources, so that technical cooperation actions respond to their needs and interests and enable their active and leading participation in agriculture in the Americas.

This identification of the situations, needs, and interests of rural youth can be carried out in youth spaces, differentiating age-specific needs, so that these particularities can

be reflected in the formulation phase and enrich agricultural management in the Americas. Case #3 of the PedAgroeco experience illustrates one way of understanding the specific realities in which rural youth live.

- It is essential that rural youth themselves be part of the work teams responsible for identifying their living conditions and ways of engaging in agriculture, so that they contribute diverse perspectives on their social, economic, cultural, and environmental situation.
- Mentorship and support from families, communities, organizations, and their technical teams constitute spaces for dialogue to share ideas, concerns, and aspirations that help define and clarify their goals.
- It is considered indispensable to conduct participatory and interactive analyses of the results obtained in the field, and for these findings to be critically discussed among young people in order to establish action priorities and allocate resources.

The main contribution of this key lies in its transformative potential, as it not only facilitates participation but also enables rural youth to make visible, analyze, and become aware of the changes needed to transform their living conditions in favor of generational justice and equality.

Example of assessment in the Public Policy for Young People 2020–2024 in Costa Rica.

It is important to note that in the development of the Public Policy for Young People 2020–2024, a significant and innovative effort was made to carry out a participatory diagnosis with young people from their different territories and diverse backgrounds, including rural youth engaged in agriculture and fishing, migrants, Afro-descendants, Indigenous peoples, and young people with disabilities, among others.

The assessment was conducted using the problem tree technique, which enabled young people to identify the causes and consequences of these problems. From there, consultations advanced toward possible solutions and the desired situation for change. This range of problems and solutions was systematized in Excel tables, which were later analyzed and organized, and whose results were distilled into four fundamental pillars of the Policy: identity, social-environmental, economic, and organizational.

Beginning the assessment with the initial impressions and reactions of young people regarding their situation proved highly important, as the preceding Public Policy for Young People had conducted a more structured diagnosis, that is, a “top-down” approach, presenting youth with a series of topics considered to be of interest to them (from an adult perspective) and asking the identified young people to mark with an X the three priorities from a predetermined list.

There is no doubt that this methodology may have been more agile for the team drafting the Policy, but it clearly overlooked the real needs experienced by young people in their contexts and diverse realities. This example illustrates how the approach has shifted toward recognizing young people as protagonists in public policy. Once again, it confirms the importance of acknowledging and valuing the diversity of identities and specific challenges faced by young people, according to their geographic context, ethnic and cultural characteristics, and other key variables that intersect in their daily lives.

FROM THE FORMULATION OF TECHNICAL COOPERATION ACTIONS

KEY 2. PARTICIPATORY FORMULATION involves establishing objectives and targets to achieve the desired changes with rural youth, whose design must be flexible in order to recognize, absorb, and integrate new priorities and needs, clearly identifying the interests of rural youth throughout the entire process. It must also consider the critical constraints or structural problems linked to shortcomings and lack of opportunities identified in the diagnosis, using these as a pivot to propose feasible alternatives in real and lived contexts.

In practical work, what elements should be considered under this key?

- A first important starting point is to define the activities and expected results to achieve the objectives, always with the participation of rural youth.

- The definition of qualitative and quantitative indicators to evaluate activities, results, and processes must respond to the priorities and needs identified by rural youth.
- The methodology must be strategically consistent with the principles of the youth approach, by developing horizontal dynamics that build on the needs of youth and strengthen their leadership and informed participation.
- The budgeting process must be youth-sensitive and ensure financial backing to support logistical arrangements (mobilization, capacity strengthening, resources to energize youth projects) required to implement sustainable technical cooperation actions for rural youth. For this purpose, the specific circumstances of youth must be considered, such as the expectation that young women assume caregiving responsibilities, or that other youth manage academic or work schedules, as well as youth living with disabilities who require adapted methodologies and schedules to enable their participation.

*An example of formulation is the **Regional Action Plan**. Aimed at Rural Youth of the Central American Integration System (SICA), this process included not only representatives of rural youth organizations but also representatives of public and private institutions and international cooperation agencies. This represents added value in the formulation of a plan, as representatives of youth mechanisms, ministries of agriculture, and international*

cooperation entities such as IICA, the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), FAO, the Spanish Agency for International Development Cooperation (AECID), the Spain-SICA Fund, and the Andalusian Agency for International Development Cooperation (AACID) were present.

This process enabled the consensus-building of actions, proposals, and strategies around four fundamental pillars:

- 1. Policies and institutional framework.*
- 2. Organization, advocacy, and youth participation in decision-making bodies.*
- 3. Access to economic, social, and cultural opportunities.*
- 4. Stakeholders, partnerships, and resource management.*

Priorities and commitments were also established to move toward the implementation of this regional action plan in 65 official territories linked to the Central American Territorial Rural Development Strategy.

This action plan was presented to the Council of Ministers of the Central American Agricultural Council, where different entities committed to supporting its main pillars and seeking the necessary financial support for its implementation.

Although specific indicators for monitoring its implementation were not established, some important quantitative indicators that this plan could include are as follows:

- *Number of territories served in the SICA region in accordance with the identified actions.*
- *Percentage of financial resources that youth mechanisms and ministries of agriculture of the involved countries invested in the needs of rural youth.*
- *Number of rural youth policies reviewed and updated in the involved countries.*
- *Number of economic, social, and cultural initiatives implemented in the 65 territories.*

These are some quantitative indicators that may be adapted and adjusted to different initiatives. It is also important to establish qualitative indicators based on baseline and endline instruments to capture changes that are not as easily measurable, such as:

- *Increased youth participation in youth and mixed organizations.*
- *Higher levels of self-esteem among participating young people.*
- *Recognition of the specific and diverse needs of young men and women.*
- *Improved communication strategies within youth organizations.*
- *Significant progress in conflict management and decision-making practices by young people within their organizations.*

Source: Prepared by author based on the Regional Action Plan of SICA (n. d.).

FROM THE IMPLEMENTATION OF TECHNICAL COOPERATION ACTIONS

KEY 3. CAPACITY STRENGTHENING, EMPOWERMENT, AND YOUTH LEADERSHIP

The life plans of young people are vital for their personal, social, professional, and collective development. The path they chart toward their ideals and purposes enables them to forge a clear and structured route to achieve their goals and face the challenges of a complex and constantly changing world. These plans must be developed consciously and assertively, taking into account both the tangible assets of their context (such as natural resources, infrastructure, connectivity, and financing) and the intangible ones (culture, knowledge, art, heritage). They must be accompanied by the strengthening of youth leadership through communication, empathy, and the articulation of efforts within intergenerational actions.

In practical work, what elements should be considered under this key?

- A first starting point is to organize work teams that include representatives of rural youth, as well as technical staff with experience and knowledge in working with young people from an empowering approach. In other words, such staff must not only be sensitized but also manage methodologies that motivate youth participation and place youth at the center of activities as drivers of change.

- Offer programs according to the age cycle of young people, based on their interests, needs, and real possibilities to contribute to agriculture in the Americas, strengthening their identity, connection, and sense of ownership of their rural context.
- Implement strategic actions to ensure the sustainability of their individual and collective life plans, strengthening youth empowerment and their capacity to influence public policies so that they incorporate a rural youth approach.

In general, young people's life plans and the strengthening of their democratic and inclusive leadership are interrelated processes that empower them to be agents of their present and lay the foundations for their adult life. To achieve this, joint and coordinated work is required so that the private sector, public institutions, social organizations, and families ensure that youth exercise all their rights, including access to all opportunities.

KEY 4. ACCESS TO OPPORTUNITIES FOR RURAL YOUTH IN AGRICULTURE IN THE AMERICAS

Strategies to achieve such access must prioritize coordination and strategic partnerships among the private sector, public institutions, NGOs, and cooperation agencies, among others, complemented by strong advocacy from young people themselves in order to promote affirmative actions that help level the playing field and offer real opportunities.

In practical work, what elements should be considered under this key?

- Technical education and training. This is essential to strengthen and integrate knowledge and practices focused on inclusive and sustainable agriculture, using participatory and dynamic methodologies that encourage ownership of this knowledge and reinforce youth empowerment.

Case #5, the PROJOVEM experience in Brazil, is an initiative aimed at understanding the reality of youth by creating spaces for their reintegration into the education system or for the development of skills for decent agricultural employment, addressing socioemotional competencies to ensure a comprehensive approach to young people's realities based on their lived experiences.

- Access to productive resources and financing. Youth, especially young rural women, face constraints in accessing key resources for the development of their life plans. It is therefore necessary to create accessible financing funds, microcredit schemes, and other incentives targeted at rural youth entrepreneurs, as a starting point to launch or expand business ideas linked to sustainable agrifood projects.
- Promotion of the care and sustainable use of biodiversity and soils, through agroecological practices, among others, which reduce the carbon footprint,

encouraging young people to learn and strengthen their knowledge on how to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by using methods and technologies that support adaptation to and mitigation of environmental challenges.

The issue of accessible financing may be illustrated by the example of Savinco Social Finance, an initiative that supports people—primarily youth—on their path toward financial independence through savings, education, and technology to improve their quality of life. This organization has projects in Peru, Ecuador, Mexico, Nepal, and Spain, and will soon begin operations in Costa Rica. Of particular interest is its “Saving to Learn” Program, which is grounded in the values of respect, trust, and responsibility and is based on the understanding that supporting young people’s life plans is essential.

This program is implemented through several methodological steps:

- 1. Selection of the area to be supported, prioritizing those with the greatest socioeconomic needs and emphasizing the establishment of bridges with local and regional stakeholders to strengthen strategic partnerships, thereby ensuring greater support and sustainability.*
- 2. Promotion of the program, including an explanation of its philosophy, values, and mode of operation.*

3. *Formation of the group, which must include at least 15 individuals willing to meet, work together, and strengthen organization.*
4. *Follow-up, mentoring, and technical advice, which are essential to guide the process and give voice to the true protagonists who bring vitality to the initiative.*
5. *Technological inclusion: participants have access to a highly efficient application to record data and support financial analysis and decision-making.*

Another example of financial services benefiting rural youth is the credit unions established in Saint Lucia, which organize events and forums aimed at engaging young people, understanding their needs, and providing useful information on finance and opportunities.

These cooperatives, such as the St. Lucia Workers' Credit Union, demonstrate a direct commitment to young entrepreneurs and work with youth through various programs designed to support education and encourage savings and investment.

The St. Lucia Workers' Credit Union has launched youth clubs as part of its projects to promote savings and investment among young people. It allocates more than \$110,000 annually to its Scholarship Program, which provides cash awards to outstanding students. These scholarships cover secondary school costs for five years and provide a transportation allowance. It also partners with institutions such as Monroe College to inform young people about higher education opportunities available in Saint Lucia and the financing options to make them accessible.

Similarly, the Laborie Credit Union of Saint Lucia operates as a financial institution that prioritizes the well-being of its members rather than profit maximization. It offers services such as savings accounts, loans, and financial advice, and operates with the objective of empowering members to achieve their financial goals.

The Laborie Credit Union has identified and responded to the financial needs of its members through community consultations, contributing to improvements in the local economy and living standards. It offers a range of services, including savings accounts, loans (at lower interest rates than banks), and transfer services that benefit young people. One of the advantages it offers youth is that land ownership is not required to access credit. For those without a financial history, a questionnaire is used to establish the applicant's profile and determine loan conditions. These conditions may include a grace period during which young people are not required to pay interest or principal for the first three months, or alternatively, until the first harvest is obtained and they are able to meet their credit obligations.

Source: Prepared by author based on SAVINCO 2025.

For rural youth, who often do not own land or hold land titles, financial modalities that waive this requirement are invaluable resources that enable them to undertake and consolidate a life project, achieve economic autonomy, and gain the capacity to influence strategic decisions within their environment.

KEY 5. ACCESS TO EMPLOYMENT AND DECENT WORK IN THE CONTEXT OF AGRICULTURE IN LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN

Case #1, the Youth Farm Program of Barbados, is an experience that provides access to employment and agricultural entrepreneurship in the Caribbean for rural youth, which, in addition to contributing to the development of their life plans, helps reduce agricultural imports.

The economic autonomy of young people is part of their life plans and refers to their capacity to generate their own income and resources to meet their practical needs and fully realize their strategic interests.

In practical work, what elements should be considered under this key?

- Receiving training and acquiring soft skills is essential for young people to access decent work and employment and to advance in their life plans.
- It is also important to establish public–private partnerships that incorporate corporate social responsibility linked to a youth approach.
- Employment opportunities for rural youth must provide appropriate conditions in terms of health, social security, job satisfaction, and alignment with their cultural identity.

In this way, increasing work and employment opportunities in agriculture in the Americas is fundamental to strengthening food security, improving environmental health, and advancing new strategies for adaptation to and mitigation of environmental challenges. Some strategies to create ecosystems that promote youth employability and entrepreneurship in the rural sector may include job placement services, scholarships, internships, and the provision of technical and financial support for youth enterprises, accompanied by simplified administrative procedures so that youth are not excluded.

KEY 6. STRENGTHENING ORGANIZATION, NETWORKS, AND COMMUNICATION

It is essential for agrifood initiatives to develop and strengthen inclusive, horizontal, and collaborative leadership among rural youth, fostering a greater sense of belonging and collective responsibility.

In practical work, what elements should be considered under this key?

- Support networks are fundamental for strengthening collective power, enabling young people to work on building alliances and connections at the local level.

The PROJOVEM program in Brazil (case #5) prioritizes the creation of support networks among participating young people, while technical teams provide mentoring and training in order to offer rural youth a space for guidance and support.

- Explore the digital sphere to connect with other like-minded groups. Online platforms and events complement in-person communication and interaction; they also contribute to expanding the reach of messages and the advocacy goals of rural youth. Digital media such as blogs, podcasts, and videos can effectively convey messages and reach broader audiences. This requires commitment from public institutions and the private sector to ensure connectivity in rural areas, as well as to promote digital skills among rural youth.

It is often said that young people generally have the ability to learn more quickly than adults. However, a rural young person in a low-connectivity environment may face limitations in accessing virtual platforms and technology. In other words, the myth that being young automatically means better knowledge and use of technology must also be challenged. Encouraging rural youth participation in areas such as bioengineering, artificial intelligence, precision agriculture, agrifood digitalization, and social entrepreneurship can strengthen their leadership in transforming key areas that contribute to food security and improving the quality of life for the entire population.

- Ongoing dialogue and active listening are fundamental elements for feedback and the strengthening of youth organizations. Spaces for exchange, roundtables, and forums can be organized to share ideas and knowledge, as well as to define collective strategies that enable rural youth to play a leading role. The aim is to promote safe environments for the expression of ideas, debate, exchange, and the strengthening of youth and intergenerational organizations and networks.

Challenges under this key include developing skills for teamwork management, fostering collaboration within networks and exchanges, and practicing conflict resolution in real-life situations.

KEY 7. CITIZENSHIP AND INFORMED PARTICIPATION IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF PUBLIC POLICIES FOR AGRICULTURE IN THE AMERICAS

The foundation for youth to fully participate in decision-making is having education in rights, values, and citizenship, as well as knowledge of the mechanisms for influencing public policies. All of this contributes to the empowerment of rural youth and encourages them to understand and consciously engage in decision-making spaces.

In practical work, what elements should be considered under this key?

- It is essential to support the creation of participation spaces where young people can influence and shape local, regional, and international agrifood policies. For this purpose, it is important to connect stakeholders in rural and urban development linked to food security and the improvement of quality of life.
- Intergenerational partnerships also expand resources and opportunities; that is, they help build bridges in the search for inspiring experiences supported by diverse sectors to position issues and public policies of interest at the local, national, and hemispheric levels.
- Rural youth must participate in decision-making spaces such as associations, cooperatives, municipal councils, student and community councils, and other

organizational bodies existing within territories. The promotion and reform of regulations that facilitate youth participation in political processes are fundamental. This is complemented by peaceful resistance, community mobilization, and collective action to challenge and transform decision-making systems marked by adult-centrism.

The youth approach promotes the opening of spaces for youth participation and advocacy to enrich the social fabric of citizenship and strengthen all strategic processes in agriculture.

KEY 8. TECHNOLOGICAL INNOVATION AS A TOOL FOR YOUTH LEADERSHIP IN AGRICULTURE

Meeting this challenge requires fostering recognition of young people's knowledge and experiences, as well as their capacity to experiment with and use technologies to consolidate their participation in agriculture in the Americas.

In practical work, what elements should be considered under this key?

- Technological innovation is essential for accessing local and international markets, making use of digital platforms and information and communication technologies that can stimulate socially, economically, and culturally sustainable projects.

Case #4, Cosecha Digital of Mexico, is a strong example of how the development of technological skills and access to digital technologies open up vast opportunities for rural youth to produce, commercialize, and lead in key areas of agriculture.

- The appropriation of technology, innovation, and markets—elements linked to Agriculture 4.0—is essential, particularly because it integrates science, research, and the traditional and ancestral knowledge of those who have lived in rural areas. It is important for rural youth to be aware that agriculture is a sector in which innovation, technology application, and agrifood digitalization can be leveraged to promote more comprehensive and sustainable development.
- Educational and training programs must integrate technological advances alongside the ethical principles that accompany them and, at the same time, encourage critical reflection on the impact of issues such as bioengineering, artificial intelligence, and others on agriculture, as well as their potential to contribute to sustainable agriculture.

To address the challenges associated with this key, rural youth must be ensured access to appropriate technological tools and the skills required to use them to consolidate their life plans and strengthen participation and intergenerational dialogue in agriculture.

FROM MONITORING AND EVALUATION

KEY 9. SAFE SPACES FOR REFLECTION ON ACHIEVEMENTS, OBSTACLES, AND LESSONS LEARNED FROM WORKING WITH YOUNG PEOPLE

In monitoring and evaluation, the youth approach makes it possible to make informed decisions and to adjust activities and the allocation of resources in order to achieve the objectives and meet the goals set by rural youth.

Case #2, PedAgroeco in Brazil, provides an example of an experience in which young people have spaces for discussion and exchange of feelings, knowledge, expectations, and aspirations regarding what their community and their own lives within and beyond it can become.

In practical work, what elements should be considered under this key?

- The monitoring of results is facilitated through the analysis of indicators, which allow for quantitative and/or qualitative measurement of the progress of interventions from a rural youth approach.

Case #5, PROJOVEM Brazil, demonstrates a process of analyzing program progress that led to identifying the need to improve targeting with respect to young women and men, as well as its evaluation and monitoring systems, in order to achieve more precise measurements of the program's medium- and long-term impacts on the quality of life of participating rural youth.

- It is important to create safe spaces where rural youth can reflect on achievements, obstacles, and lessons learned throughout the process. Participatory monitoring and evaluation empower youth and promote their influence in decision-making processes.
- This collective reflection makes it possible to adjust the implementation of activities and reallocate technical and financial resources in order to strengthen key evaluation elements such as effectiveness, efficiency, relevance, sustainability, coherence, and appropriateness of actions from a rural youth approach.
- In any evaluation process, it is essential to promote transparency and accountability regarding the use of resources and the achievement of targets and results, with a focus on the priorities of rural youth.
- The systematization of experiences is an important step in evaluation and ensures that the lessons learned from working with rural youth can inform new concepts, methodologies, and approaches, as well as scale up and replicate these experiences with the necessary adaptations and ownership.



VIII. CONTEXTS AND ENABLING
ENVIRONMENTS FOR LIFE SKILLS
AND THE PARTICIPATION OF RURAL
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Young people operate within social, economic, cultural, and environmental conditions that can become allies in ensuring that rural youth receive the support they need to thrive in a productive and healthy environment.

- Family, educational, and community environments, as well as spaces of interaction with others, are primary settings for the development of skills, abilities, and values among young people in rural areas. They should serve as privileged spaces for building self-esteem, empowerment, leadership, and citizenship among rural youth. Therefore, families, peer groups, youth organizations, and communities play a key role in the personal and collective empowerment of rural youth.

Case #3, on circular economy in Colombia, is an example of promoting new technologies within the context of family farming, enabling rural youth, within the family environment, to learn, improve family production practices, and position themselves within their household based on the skills they develop.

- Peer groups in social, sports, artistic, cultural, religious, and/or political spheres are highly important spaces for the socialization process of young people, as they build bonds of friendship, trust, loyalty, mutual support, cooperation, and

solidarity. These values are fundamental for empowerment, leadership, and the development of active and leading youth citizenship.

In case #1, the Youth Farm Program, it was possible to observe the role of youth interaction spaces, such as youth farms, in strengthening not only technical skills but also socialization and leadership.

- Communities must become spaces where young people participate under favorable conditions that enable them to exercise leadership, generate proposals, and become leaders in implementing strategic actions. To this end, adultism and adult-centrism must be challenged, allowing rural youth to commit to and enjoy the development of their communities and territories.
- Intergenerational citizenship can be built through relationships among people of different ages who are interested in and committed to solidarity-based development, grounded in the exchange of knowledge and the strengthening of diverse skills and capacities. Intergenerational relationships make it possible to exchange and share learning and aspirations toward more inclusive and sustainable development.
- The institutional framework present in rural territories must support youth initiatives through plans, policies, programs, and projects that encourage spaces for training, capacity building, and organization, as well as access to financing. To strengthen the youth population within inclusive rural territories, changes are required in vertical

institutional cultures and in conceptions of youth as mere beneficiaries of public institutions, so that they are engaged as agents of change.

An integrative approach, conscious to the needs and rights of rural youth, can ensure their full participation in decision-making processes that impact their present, based on a vision of technical cooperation and institutional action directed toward all generations.

This comprehensive approach is linked to the need to enhance youth participation in all interventions from the bottom up, taking into account both a youth approach and an intergenerational approach.

Conceived in this way, participation is a democratic process that entails individual, collective, and intergenerational commitment to promote the transformations needed in the environment and achieve the full development of youth, especially in rural areas. Young people must be at the center of participation and leadership in initiatives that involve them and that can bring about change in their living conditions.

It is worth noting that participation goes beyond the number of young people convened for an initiative; nor can it be confused with consultations based on premises and proposals constructed in a “top-down” manner, which are often marked by vertical and adult-centric approaches.

Case #2, referring to the PedAgroeco experience in Brazil, provides an example of participation achieved through the use of innovative methodologies that enable rural youth to express their interests and priorities in the planning of project actions. In this way, in addition to ensuring a youth approach in the formulation phase, it contributes to the empowerment of young people and strengthens their leadership.

Participation and empowerment can be strengthened by using:

1. Methodologies based on playful activities for capacity strengthening

The ways in which rural youth learn, assimilate, question, and appropriate knowledge must form part of a pedagogical mediation process aligned with their life cycle stage and the specific characteristics of their context.

Case #1, referring to the Youth Farm Program in Barbados, demonstrates a successful experience in which rural youth learn about agricultural technologies in spaces specifically designed for this purpose, thereby promoting youth rootedness and their integration into agricultural employment or the advancement of agribusiness entrepreneurship.

This entails the co-creation of inspiring, engaging, and functional methods to learn through

practice and to analyze new technological trends, agrifood digitalization, sustainable agriculture, and future food demands, as well as to address the current climate crisis. This does not mean that knowledge linked to ancestral wisdom and cultures should be disregarded; on the contrary, it should be integrated into a new paradigm of knowledge construction based on the diversity of knowledges, where women, youth, Indigenous peoples, Afro-descendants, fishers, and farmers contribute to the collective construction of knowledge.

2. Promotion of participation linked to decision-making

Young people have the right to fully participate in the social, political, and economic life of their region and country, as well as at the global level. The methodology must promote the empowerment of rural youth so that they can express their needs and interests in public life, generating conditions and opportunities that foster their individual and collective growth. This enables young people to be part of working groups that formulate proposals and engage in negotiations, both in person and virtually, in spaces where substantive decisions about their territories are made. It also allows their proposals to be considered by authorities, governmental and international bodies, private enterprises, and civil society, so that the decisions taken positively affect their environment and their lives.

3. Strengthening intergenerational dialogue and fostering a critical attitude toward change

The ability of young people to question symbols, perceptions, languages, and behaviors—both conscious and unconscious—is fundamental to building new intergenerational relationships in which power and discrimination are never guiding markers. On the contrary, the consolidation of values and principles must guide the construction of these relationships and bonds between generations.

The contributions of youth, combined with the experiences of adults, can build bridges to move from critique to action and, therefore, to the creation of new dynamics. Through the integration of this methodological proposal, aligned with the youth approach, it is possible to promote transformations toward justice, equity, and generational equality in the environments where rural youth operate.

One of the main challenges in applying this methodological proposal is to move beyond existing stereotypes and value judgments about rural youth, advancing toward respect, empathy, and a willingness to understand and recognize their rights and their capacity for agency within their territories.

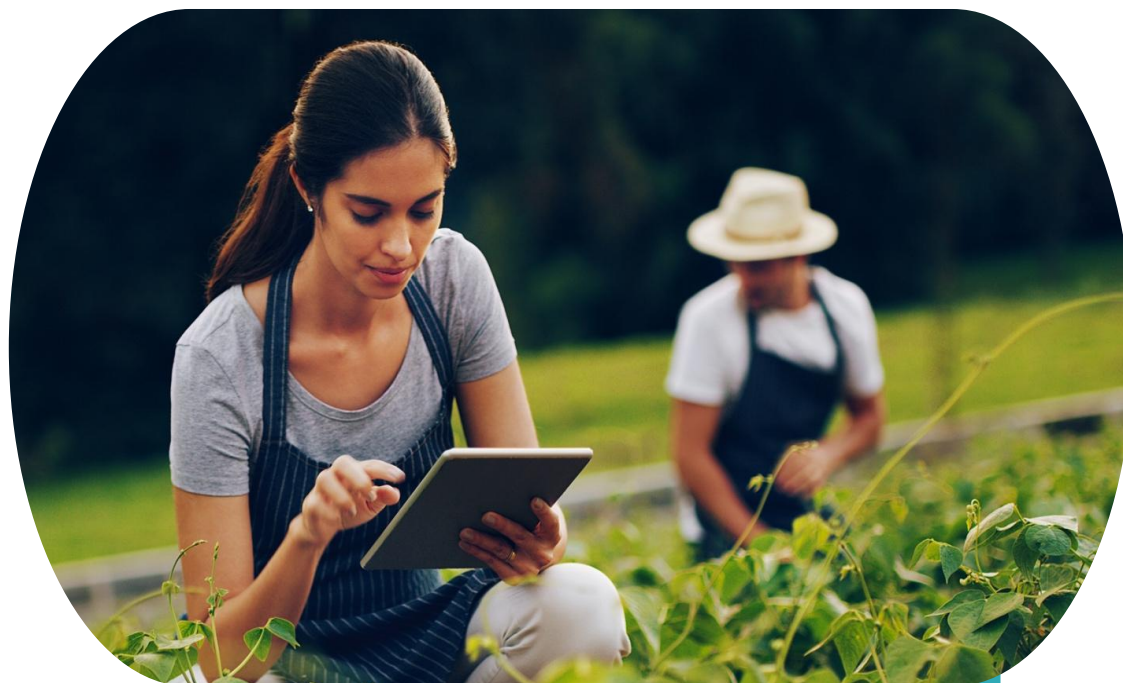
Insight #3:

Methodology is a central aspect of the proper management of any initiative, as a variety of factors depend on it, including the level of commitment that the counterpart population may develop, the sustainability of partnerships, and the efficient and effective use of resources, among others.

How often have you reflected on the most appropriate type of methodology for the work you are going to carry out, or, once the initiative has been completed, identified the methodological strengths and weaknesses?

Activity #6:

To ensure that this guide is updated and strengthened, you are invited to share the good practices for working with rural youth that you apply in your work, or those you are aware of that may facilitate the mainstreaming of the youth approach. Please send the information to the email addresses of the IICA Women and Youth Program: priscila.zuniga@iica.int and silvia.castellano@iica.int.



IX. GUIDING QUESTIONS FOR
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A series of questions are presented below to help integrate the youth approach into the cycle of cooperation initiatives linked to rural youth in agriculture in the Americas.

**Baseline questions for initial diagnoses and for building theories of change in initiatives
with a youth approach**

1. Are the individuals who will implement the intervention familiar with the national and international normative frameworks related to youth and rural youth?
2. Are they aware of ministerial policies that support youth empowerment, participation, and the improvement of young people's quality of life? Do they know whether a youth law exists and what it proposes?
3. Do they know the age range defined in each country to determine whether a person belongs to the youth population?

4. Do they have staff who manage basic elements and possess an adequate level of understanding of the youth approach as a foundation for dialogue and intervention design?
5. Are there specific positions and resources allocated for specialists and young people from the community to facilitate the mainstreaming of the youth approach in the planned intervention?
6. Does the intervention aim to establish strategic partnerships to strengthen the application of the youth approach, also ensuring its continuity? Is consideration given to engaging with non-governmental organizations, including associations that take into account differences between women and men, as well as with academia and other international organizations?

Case #1, the Youth Farm Program, highlights the importance of intersectoral work to ensure the sustainability of technical cooperation actions, as well as the comprehensive nature of the training in which rural youth participate.

Questions during the formulation of technical cooperation actions and institutional initiatives

These questions aim to generate reflection during the formulation phase of an initiative with a youth approach:

1. Is the youth approach integrated into the objectives, results, activities, and indicators defined during the formulation phase of the intervention? In what way?
2. Does the formulation ensure the full, free, and informed participation of rural young people as agents of change?
3. Does the formulation incorporate innovative, participatory, and creative strategies for working with rural youth?
4. Is the proposed budget responsive to the needs and strategic interests of young people?
5. Are participatory and co-creation mechanisms with young people themselves included in the systematization, monitoring, and evaluation of the intervention?

Questions during the implementation of technical cooperation actions and institutional initiatives

1. Are actions considered that promote the mainstreaming of the youth approach in the implementation of the intervention?

In Section VI, corresponding to the case studies, initiatives aimed at rural youth were introduced that are grounded in a youth approach, as they promote youth empowerment, leadership, and influence in decision-making processes. It is essential to ensure this approach in development initiatives within the agricultural sector, as in some initiatives the traditional approach still prevails, seeking to “incorporate” young people into productive activities defined by adults and without consulting their interests and needs.

2. Have differentiated methodological strategies been considered according to the diverse needs and interests of the youth population?
3. Is the internal training of implementing personnel on the youth approach and its application relevant and adapted to the needs of the process?

4. Is budget execution responsive and does it incorporate the youth approach in the intervention?
5. Are spaces for interinstitutional work and public–private partnerships being implemented in the execution of actions and activities from a youth approach?

Questions for monitoring and evaluating technical cooperation actions and institutional interventions

1. Do the evaluation and monitoring systems, methods, and/or guidelines incorporate the youth approach?
2. What adjustments could be made to ensure that these systems are compatible with and relevant to a youth approach?
3. Are there indicators that allow for tracking the resources allocated and invested in mainstreaming the youth approach?
4. Do youth play an active role in monitoring and evaluation, as well as throughout the entire project cycle beginning with the diagnosis?

5. Do rural youth participate in the systematization of the experience as a strategy to strengthen or promote youth leadership in rural settings?

Activity #7:

You are invited to reflect on the following questions:

1. In what situations do you believe this guide may be useful?
2. What spaces do you identify for promoting the formulation of public and private policies with a youth approach?

Please share your comments with the team of the Institute's Women and Youth Program on whether this guide met your expectations and to indicate what content or experiences could enrich it. Please send your comments to the following email addresses: priscila.zuniga@iica.int and silvia.castellano@iica.int.

As a closing to this interaction on working with rural youth, you are encouraged to inform the team of the IICA Women and Youth Program which other concepts you consider important to include in this glossary by writing to the following email addresses: priscila.zuniga@iica.int and silvia.castellano@iica.int.



X. GLOSSARY

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- **Adult-centrism:** A perspective in which adults consider their own experience, values, interests, perceptions, and viewpoints to be more important, relevant, and legitimate than those of young people. Adults see themselves as the center and the norm, thereby minimizing or disregarding the experiences, realities, and needs of young people (Santos and González 2020).
- **Adulthood:** A form of discrimination, oppression, or prejudice against young people based on the belief that adults are inherently superior, whether in terms of experience, wisdom, rights, or rational decision-making capacity. This concept refers to the oppression or marginalization of young people because of their age and is manifested in behaviors and attitudes that underestimate or ignore young people's perspectives and capacities (Kramer 2019).
- **Agrifood digitalization:** The process of innovation and use of technology for the benefit of agriculture, the people involved in value chains, and territories. It is a complex process involving multiple stakeholders, making the definition of public policies essential (IICA n.d.a).
- **Digital divide:** Inequality in access to and use of information and communication technologies (ICTs) among different population groups. In the case of the youth digital divide, it is reflected in the lack of access to digital devices, connectivity, quality internet, and technological skills. Although youth show high acceptance of and willingness to use ICTs, rural areas are marked by limited connectivity, lack of devices,

and insufficient resources to purchase mobile data, among other constraints (ECLAC 2019; Ruiz 2024).

- **Generational justice:** This concept implies equity among generations, based on the idea that the pursuit of well-being by the current generation should not undermine the opportunities for a good and dignified life for future generations (IICA 2023).

- **Intergenerational approach:** Highlights the importance of promoting and integrating knowledge and experiences among different generations to create a horizontal dynamic that reduces existing gaps and contributes to the creation of participation spaces for all people. It integrates the youth perspective as a frame of reference for positioning young people. It recognizes that youth are not a replacement generation, but rather a collective with rights, needs, demands, visions, and proposals that must be present on the global agenda (IICA 2023).

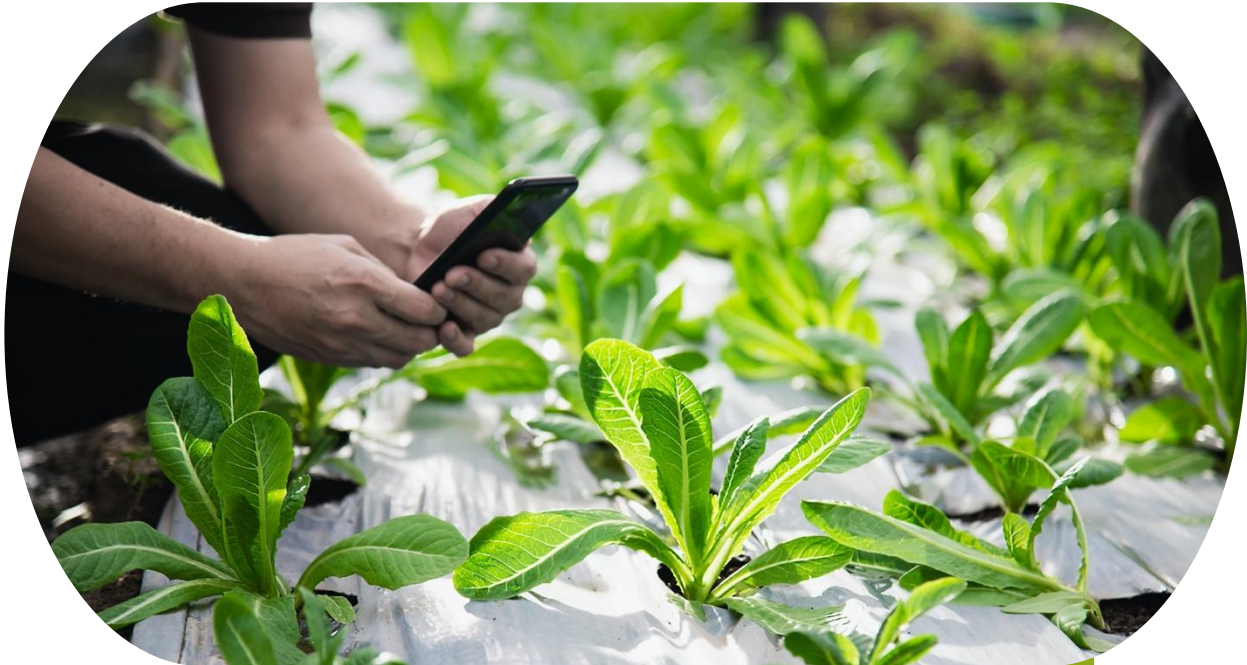
- **Life plan:** An individual's vision of their present and future life. In the case of young people, it cannot be reduced solely to their adult future, but rather to the possibility of developing a life project—a guide with objectives and goals—that enables the highest level of economic and decision-making autonomy during their youth. A life plan for young people serves as a guide to set and achieve objectives and may include personal, professional, economic, and spiritual goals (UNFPA 2013).

- **Rural youth:** Young people who reside, study, or work in rural areas and are mostly engaged in activities related to agriculture, livestock, fisheries, and other forms of rural

production. This population generally faces greater inequality compared to youth living in urban areas (IICA 2023).

- **Youth approach:** A political and methodological vision that seeks to recognize young people as rights holders and promote their substantive participation as a generation in society. This approach is based on the idea that youth have agency and the freedom to develop their life plans (IICA 2023).

- **Youth empowerment:** A process that leads to the acquisition and development of capacities and skills that enable young people to access decision-making and leadership positions, as well as to exercise autonomy in building their life projects. As a result, changes occur in ways of thinking, in cultures, in institutional structures, and in the distribution of organizational and societal resources toward youth so that they can build their autonomy (Ministry of Welfare of Mexico n.d.).



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