

# World Food Forum Youth Mechanism

## Draft Terms of Reference – for consultation

A BETTER FOOD FUTURE FOR ALL



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## Background

Engagement of children and youth in the context of agri-food systems is pivotal to the socio-economic progress of the global community and toward achieving the targets of the 2030 Agenda. It further contributes to the work of the United Nations (UN), especially on dimensions of People and Planet, and its nexus of human and environmental resilience and rights.

In early 2021, Food and Agriculture Organization of the UN (FAO)'s Youth Committee (an internal staff structure of FAO) approved the establishment of the World Food Forum (WFF)<sup>1</sup> as a space for youth activities, led by the FAO secretariat in cooperation with other Rome-Based Agencies (RBAs).

As part of the preparation of the first WFF Assembly, youth organisations and advocates from different continents will deliberate and develop the WFF Youth Mechanism, which provides a dedicated, sustained, self-organised, and institutional space for the youth community to feed into the work of the WFF, including its governance. In the spirit of *with and for young people*, the work undertaken through the Youth Mechanism also supports the UN Youth Strategy Youth 2030, especially its social dimension.

This zero draft document elaborates Terms of Reference (TOR) for the WFF Youth Mechanism [to be revised and adopted at the WFF Assembly in October 2021]. The TORs will be used to establish the Youth Mechanism, especially its Focal Points Group, Co-Chairs, and initiate the process for the establishment of the Youth Mechanism Assembly. Further addendums to the TOR can be developed further in consultation with the Youth Mechanism and youth groups.

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<sup>1</sup> TOR of the World Food Forum: <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1Z7H3yqZJvc17NTCQ5-rP6Fy2gwyjTco/view?usp=sharing>, website of the World Food Forum: <http://www.world-food-forum.org/>

## 1. Purpose

The World Food Forum Youth Engagement Mechanism (WFF YM, *Mechanism*) coordinates and facilitates formal youth engagement in the context of the World Food Forum (WFF).

## 2. Core Values

The WFF Youth Mechanism acknowledges and values the diversity and dignity of all persons. The WFF Youth Mechanism recognizes and abides by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights<sup>2</sup>.

## 3. Composition of the Governing Bodies

### 3.1 Focal Points Group

The Focal Points Group acts as a body which guides the strategic direction of the WFF Youth Mechanism as mandated by the Assembly. Each Focal Point acts in the interests of the WFF Youth Mechanism. It is composed of representatives / focal points from<sup>3</sup> 1) youth constituencies / counterparts of the UN counterparts and avenues related to agriculture and food thematic 2) representatives from person-centric and minority youth stakeholder groups 3) youth/youth groups identified through a public process<sup>4</sup> 5) youth that are part of the WFF Advisory Group as deemed relevant by the Focal Points Group Co-Chairs. The identification procedures are detailed in the Annex.

The composition of the Focal Points Group must reflect gender-parity and regional balance. The term of an individual person as a Focal Point is 2 years and appointment is possible for a maximum total of 2 terms.

### 3.2 Co-Chairs of the Focal Points Group

Two Co-Chairs of the Focal Points Group, who facilitate the Focal Points Group's work, will be identified by the Mechanism and serve a term of one year. The terms of the Co-Chairs will be staggered such that a new Co-Chair enters office every six months. At least one Co-Chair must be from a food and agriculture-focused youth entity. Co-chairing by one individual person is limited to a maximum of one term. Further details regarding the Co-Chairs are available in the Annex.

### 3.3 Assembly/Membership

The Assembly is the universal constituency structure. The Assembly is composed of non-for-profit organizations, either youth-led and youth-serving organizations and/or youth branches of existing organizations, as well as individual youth advocates (under the age of 35). Organisational members (called "entities") of the assembly are values-based non-for-profit youth entities (ie: civil society, social movements, networks, organisations, coalitions, etc.).

Admission to the Assembly occurs through an open registration form hosted online and/or in-person, in which registrations are processed by the Focal Points Group in-line with the criteria set out in this TOR. Joining the Assembly is non-competitive in nature. The Co-chairs, with the support of the Focal Points Group, maintain a record of the registrations and membership of the Assembly.

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<sup>2</sup> <https://www.ohchr.org/en/udhr/pages/udhrindex.aspx>

<sup>3</sup> The listing (and its order) is a classification for informational purposes and does not imply a strict delineation or hierarchy

<sup>4</sup> Detailed guidelines for such a process, including elections may be developed further. For the purpose of establishment of the WFF Youth Mechanism, the first round of entities in the group come through an open selection process carried out by youth entities

## 4. Open-ended Partners Working Group

In addition to the composition of the governing bodies of the Mechanism, an Open-ended Partners Working Group serves as a structure for interested youth-serving civil society organisations, UN agencies, members of the WFF Global Network, WFF Champions, Cooperation Partners, and other organisations and groups interested in supporting the work of the Youth Mechanism. The Open-ended Partners Working Group serves as a multiplier group and an open network for joint action.

## 5. Methods of Work

The Methods of Work outlined in this section offer a framework. The detailed election, decision-making guidelines, and convening frequency of the Assembly may be elaborated further by the Co-Chairs and the Focal Points Group.

### 5.1 General Coordination

The work of the Youth Mechanism is coordinated through the Focal Points Group and its Co-Chairs, who are responsible for general facilitation and liaison with the WFF Secretariat.

### 5.2 Meetings

The Focal Points Group may meet via monthly meetings virtually and/or on a needs-based basis. Quorum is reached when at least one-third of the members of the Focal Points Group are present, together with both the Co-Chairs or their representatives. Issue / task specific / sub-group meetings may be organised as needed with prior consultation with the Focal Points Group.

It is encouraged that the Open-Ended Partners Working Group meets every three (3) months. The arrangements for the meetings may be supported by the WFF secretariat staff.

The Assembly may convene in conjunction with the WFF Youth Assembly. Additional general meetings of the Assembly may be called for by the Focal Points Group through the Co-Chairs as required.

### 5.3 Decision-making

All decisions are taken through consensus. The detailed guidelines and procedures for decision-making will be laid out by the Focal Points Group.

Decisions can be appealed by the Assembly, members of the Assembly, and/or the Focal Points Group, whereby the Assembly considers the appeal.

### 5.4 Substantive Positions

As part of its work, the Youth Mechanism may produce substantive policy positions and/or recommendations. These positions may not override the positions of the involved youth groups. The Mechanism may also designate leads for specific roles such as communications, policy, etc.

The policy positions and recommendations will not be considered as policy positions of FAO, other UN entities that might be involved in the WFF, nor the individual organizations participating in WFF; positions and recommendations from the Mechanism will be brought to the attention of the UN counterparts for their consideration.

## 6. Further Institutional Representation and Engagement

### 6.1 WFF Advisory and Coordination Groups

The Youth Mechanism has two standing seats in the WFF Advisory Group through the Co-Chairs of the Focal Points Group<sup>5</sup>.

The meetings of the inter-agency WFF Coordination Group are open to all entities in the Focal Points Group. The Youth Mechanism further acts as the youth Co-Chair of the inter-agency Coordination Group.

### 6.2 WFF Champions Network, Volunteers Network, and Young Scientists Group

The Mechanism will be consulted by the WFF secretariat for future nominations of youth representatives to the various structures of the WFF. Representatives can be suggested to the WFF secretariat from the composition of the Mechanism, through an open process, or both. Similar modalities will be applied for youth representation in the WFF Champions Network, Young Scientists Group and other structures that may come up.

### 6.3 Food Systems Coordination Hub and its Advisory Group

Building upon the model of youth Vice-Chairs in the UN Food System Summit, the Youth Mechanism also advocates for youth engagement in the implementation and follow-up of the UN Food Systems Summit<sup>6</sup>, where the youth community can feed into, support and be beneficiaries of the implementation activities.

### 6.4 Other fora

As deemed relevant and appropriate by the Assembly and Focal Points Group, the Youth Mechanism will engage as a food and agriculture youth constituency in other fora and governance bodies. Where mechanisms for youth engagement already exist, the WFF Youth Mechanism constituents, where possible, appropriate and desired, engage through these existing structures (ie: Major Group for Children and Youth, Civil Society Mechanism of the Committee on World Food Security (CSM4CFS), Children and Youth constituency to United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (YOUNGO), etc.). The methods of engagement will be defined by the Focal Points Group and Assembly.

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<sup>5</sup> These can be among the Co-Chairs or youth from the mechanism nominated through the Co-Chairs following a due process

<sup>6</sup> The *Food Systems Coordination Hub* will be hosted by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), within the Office of the FAO Director-General with full-time staff seconded from the UN Rome-based agencies (RBAs), and from other relevant entities. Through its work, the Hub will act as a critical nexus point inside the UN system to bring together food systems knowledge and expertise to support action. The Hub will leverage the existing technical and operational capacity of the RBAs, and draw upon the totality of UN system capacities, including at regional and country level, to coordinate the support requested by countries. Collaboration with International Financial Institutions (IFIs) to support country priorities will also be prioritized.

## Note on Process

The work on this TOR and establishment of the Youth Mechanism has been led by the *Working Group on Governance* in preparing the WFF Assembly for October 2021. The composition of the Working Group was determined by consensus between the Core Group.

The Working Group is Co-Chaired by Ms. Genna Tesdall (Director of the Young Professionals for Agricultural Development [YPARD]) and Ms. Yugratna Srivastava (India, Plant-for-the-Planet and Global Coordinator of the Children and Youth Major Group [MGCY] of UNEP). Composition of the Working Group: Jim Leandro Cano (Philippines, Youth Alliance for Zero Hunger), Pramisha Thapaliya (Nepal, Real Food Systems and SDG 2 Focal Point of the Children and Youth Major Group [MGCY] for High-Level Political Forum [HLPF]), Marie-Claire Graf (Switzerland, Children and Youth constituency to UNFCCC [YOUNGO]), and Lisanne van Oosterhoud (Netherlands, Youth Food and Agriculture Activist).

Timeline (to be reflected once the TOR is adopted)

*Current Version of the TOR Adopted on [day] [month] [year]*

## Annex

### Functions of the Youth Mechanism

The Youth Mechanism serves the broad functions of -

- **Policy Advocacy:** Collective and meaningful participation of young people in official and formal avenues of policy design, implementation, monitoring, follow-up and review of governance of the WFF at all levels.
- **Youth Action:** Provide young people with an inclusive platform that encourages them to lead, join, showcase and share innovative and effective actions aimed at addressing the needs of children and youth related to food and agriculture activities
- **Space for Discussion:** Provision of platforms and opportunities of dialogue with political decision makers, as well as among youth of different rightsholder groups.
- **Knowledge and Capacity Building:** Facilitation of capacity building processes and activities for young people aimed at enhancing understanding, knowledge and skills in relation to the focus areas of the WFF and its technical and political processes and organs.

### Further elaboration on identification of Focal Points Group

In addition to the representatives from the youth constituencies linked to the themes of food and agriculture, the Focal Points Group will also comprise youth advocates / groups that are identified through an open public process. It is recommended that the total composition of the Focal Points Group does not exceed 25 individuals.

- Appointments for the representatives from the formal youth engagement constituency /counterpart will be made in consultation with the respective youth coordinators / focal points of each constituency/counterpart. In the case where the appointments reflect major regional or gender imbalance, the Co-Chairs can inform the youth coordinators and ask for voluntary adjustments.

- For the inaugural Focal Points group, an open call will be conducted by the working group establishing the Youth Mechanism. Selections will be conducted through a due process involving a selection committee. Members will be selected considering geography, gender and type of expertise (elaborated in the next section) to keep a well-balanced set of inputs and views.
- Nominations may also be representatives from specific groups / organisations whose work is relevant to the WFF.

### Logistics on Invitation Letters for the Focal points Group

After the entities in the Focal Points Group have been identified, the logistics of Invitation letters will be carried by the WFF Secretariat jointly with the youth Co-Chairs. The composition of the Focal Points Group will be made publicly available on the WFF website.

### Expertise and areas of focus

The Youth Focal Points Group, in addition to being balanced in terms of gender, region and representation of minority groups, will aim to comprise youth from various backgrounds. These factors can include, inter alia,

- Research / academia
- Action portfolio including on-ground action
- Policy expertise
- Entrepreneur / young workforce
- From a range of thematic focuses inter alia resilience, sustainable development, economic aspect, energy sustainability, social dimension, humanitarian groups etc.
- Range of groups, including informal youth groups of various scopes: grassroots, regional, international, etc.
- From person-centric and marginalised youth groups inter alia Indigenous youth, young migrants, refugees, young persons with disabilities, young people living with HIV, young people facing work and descent based discrimination, etc.
- Youth who have not previously engaged in the UN system /international processes together with youth with previous experiences
- Youth on the frontline of food and agriculture processes, especially young people from climate vulnerable countries

### Communication protocol

Entity	Aspect of communication	Primary recipient	Additional group(s) to cc if any
Communication from WFF Secretariat	Administrative / coordination aspect	Co Chairs	
	General information sharing	All Focal Points Group	Co-chairs / focal points
Communication from member states	Requests for participation, speaking slots, others matters	Co-chairs	All Focal Points Group as relevant



Communication from WFF partners	Requests for participation, speaking, others matters, collaboration	Co-chairs	All Focal Points Group as relevant
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## Operations

The operation of the Youth Mechanism is voluntary in nature as a basis. The WFF secretariat will endeavor to provide resources for the operations of the Youth Mechanism, especially the Focal Points Group, Focal Points Group Co-Chairs, and the Assembly, either in-kind or through grants, depending on available resources. If grants are made available, they will be channeled through a youth organization associated with FAO, based on a recommendation from the Focal Points Group.

## Notice of Meeting

Unless otherwise agreed, notice of each meeting confirming the venue, time and date together with an agenda of items to be discussed and supporting papers, will be forwarded or notified to each member of the Focal Points Group and any other person required to attend, no later than five working days before the date of the meeting. Task / issue specific meetings / working group meetings may be convened as required.

## Terms of Reference of the Youth Focal Points Group Co-Chairs

This section outlines Terms of Reference, including the election process for the Co-Chairs of the Youth Mechanism. This has been developed utilising similar existing election frameworks of the youth constituencies in the UN system such as the SDG7 Youth Constituency, Children and Youth Major Group of UNEP, among others.

### 1. Term Period

- a. The mandate period of the Co-Chairs is one (1) year, and staggered in nature.
- b. The expected work commitment is 5-10 hours per week

### 2. Eligibility

- a. The Co-Chairs are member entities of the Youth Mechanism, represented by one lead individual from each entity designated to facilitate the coordination of the Mechanism.
- b. The Co-Chairs must be from:
  - i. A youth-or-child led member entity (non-for profit youth organisation), with the named representative(s) being aged 29 or below at time of election;
- c. The co-chairs shall be/have:
  - i. Extensive experience in an advocacy-focused, membership-based, youth-led or youth-serving organisation
  - ii. Experience in and understanding of the UN and multilateral system, including working with member states and relevant UN entities, in particular agriculture and food related topics
  - iii. Experience and understanding of agriculture, food, youth engagement and related nexus
  - iv. Able to appreciate and work with people from diverse backgrounds, identities, ideologies, viewpoints and nationalities
  - v. Able to step outside of themselves and understand that they are an interlocutor, and facilitator (and not a representative) of global youth

- d. The lead representatives of the Co Chair entity should be/have:
  - i. Advocacy and volunteer coordination experience;
  - ii. Fluent in spoken and written English. Working knowledge of other official UN languages is appreciated
  - iii. Experience in administrative work and management in youth lead or youth serving sectors;
- e. To avoid conflict of interest, throughout their mandate, the Co-Chair and its lead representatives must not:
  - i. Be employed by any of the main UN partner and counterpart entities of the Youth Mechanism, namely the WFF Secretariat, FAO, and other Rome-Based Agencies (WFP and IFAD) (excluding internships at the UN and its specialised agencies not named above conducted as a part of a university program).
- f. The Co-Chair entity may at any point in time replace their primary lead with another person within the entity that meets the criteria outlined in this TOR. The notification of such a change needs to be communicated to the membership of the Mechanism and the WFF Secretariat.
- g. Leads representing the Co-Chairs, at present, are not compensated. They may derive funding through their organisation or through mechanisms like a paid fellowship through a graduate program, a paid internship, a specific scholarship or any other means if it is from a non-profit entity. In such a situation, this arrangement needs to be disclosed during the time of application, and the individual has to declare that the terms of funding do not pose an influence in their work.

### **3. Roles and Tasks**

- a. The Co-Chairs are responsible for coordinating Youth Mechanism through the Focal Points Group and activities within its areas of work (Policy & Advocacy, Capacity Building, Youth Action, and Knowledge) as they relate to the topic of food and agriculture nexus
- b. More specifically, the position involves the following tasks:
  - i. Facilitate developing and executing a work plan for the Mechanism;
  - ii. Act as the primary liaison between the Youth Mechanism, other relevant youth and non-youth stakeholders, and the relevant UN and multilateral entities;
  - iii. Facilitate the preparation of formal inputs (statements, papers, reports, etc) related to their respective processes and engagement avenues;
  - iv. Inform the membership and Focal Points Group about the upcoming opportunities, developments, and progress of work, as well as report back on organised events and actions through the official mailing list and the official social media platforms;
  - v. Coordinate regular and timely constituency calls;
  - vi. Maintain the website and the Youth Mechanism Google Drive up-to-date, including minutes from all relevant meetings;
  - vii. Ensure reflection and regular evaluation of activities;
  - viii. Represent or ensure representation of the Youth Mechanism in the WFF Advisory Board
  - ix. Represent or ensure representation of the Youth Mechanism at the meetings of the inter-agency structures in the UN and relevant processes of the Youth2030 Strategy;

- x. Other tasks as delegated by the Mechanism, or tasks undertaken in relation to the above tasks.

#### **4. Election Process**

- a. The Co-Chairs are elected through an anonymous election process by membership (Assembly) of the Youth Mechanism
- b. If the Youth Mechanism fails to conduct such elections for more than 3 months beyond the official term of the Co-Chairs, the WFF Secretariat may be approached by a group of members for further consultations. The WFF Secretariat may facilitate / support the conduction the elections on behalf of the Youth Mechanism in exceptional circumstances as per the guidelines outlined in this TOR
- c. Eligibility to vote in the elections is limited to members who joined the Youth Mechanism no less than 30 days prior to the first day of the elections
- d. Each member organisation and member individual is granted one vote
- e. The election is based on a ranked-choice voting system
- f. The election process is facilitated by the Co-Chair serving the current term and a group of volunteers from the Mechanism if not conducted by the WFF Secretariat as per clause 4.b)
- g. The timeline of the election process is enclosed in Appendix 1
- h. The expression of interest form is enclosed in Appendix 2
- i. Expressions of interest of eligible candidates will be presented to the constituency members via the mailing list or an official email of the WFF Secretariat if 5.b) applies
- j. The candidates are not permitted to promote or conduct canvassing related to their candidacy in communication channels of the constituency, such as the mailing list, WhatsApp groups, Telegram groups, etc. beyond the official communications about all candidates disseminated by the facilitators of the elections.
- k. The candidates are not permitted to spend any funding or in-kind resources on the promotion of their candidacy.

#### **5. Accountability**

- a. The Co-Chairs in their work are accountable to the members (Assembly) of the Youth Mechanism and the Focal Points Group
- b. The Co-Chairs must carry out their duties in a neutral and facilitative manner, in line with the Values of the Youth Mechanism
- c. The Co-Chairs must submit a brief report of their activities and handover report upon the conclusion of their mandate

#### **6. Resignation or Termination**

- a. A Co-Chair may be removed through a decision of the Assembly of the Youth Mechanism after a due process
- b. Should a Co-Chair want to resign, they can submit their resignation to the Assembly of the Youth Mechanism and the Youth Focal Points Group
  - i. In case of a mid-term resignation, the incumbent Co-Chair will coordinate the election process for determining the second Co-Chair as per the modalities outlined in this TOR
  - ii. Should there be a situation that there are no incumbent Co-Chairs, the Focal Points Group may designate interim Co-Chairs, and initiate election process for the Co-Chairs as per the modalities outlined in this TOR which must happen

within 3 months after the effective date of resignation / termination of the incumbent Co-Chairs

1. In case the Mechanism is not able to internally organise election, they may seek support from the WFF secretariat in line with clause 4.b)

*Appendices*

1. Election process timeline

Election process stage	Length
Announcement of the elections by the incumbent Co-Chairs (or WFF Secretariat if 4.b) applies)	---
Collection of expressions of interest from members	2 weeks
Screening of the expressions of interest for formal eligibility	1 week
Presentation of candidates via the mailing list (and WFF Secretariat official email if 4.b) applies)	1 week
Open of candidates with the constituency members to present their platform and answer questions	
Election process	7 days
Announcement of the election results Onboarding of the new Co-Chairs	---

2. Application form

The following are suggested as base questions for the nomination form for the election process. These may be further refined by the election committee.

Applying entity	
Motivation for applying and metrics for success (max. 250 words)	
Brief history of entity's engagement with the UN and multilateral organisations (max. 200 words)	
Brief history of entity's engagement with the Youth Mechanism (max. 200 words)	
Brief history of entity's experience with food and agriculture issues (max. 200 words)	

Lead information

Full name	
Date of birth	
Country of citizenship	
Country of residence	
Gender	
Position	
Email address	
Previous engagements with Youth Mechanism and WFF processes ?	
Why are you suitable for this role?	
How are you planning to accommodate this role in your personal and professional plans for the next one year?	
Biography (max. 200 words)	