

*Perspective*

# Cultivating the future: The vital role of participation of pupils in agriculture

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## DESCRIPTION

Youth engagement in agriculture is not only a pressing global issue but also an opportunity for sustainable development. With the world's population expected to reach 9.7 billion by 2050, the demand for food is increasing at an unprecedented rate. To meet this demand and ensure food security, there is a growing need for innovative, efficient, and sustainable agricultural practices. Youth engagement in agriculture can play a pivotal role in addressing these challenges. This essay explores the importance of involving youth in agriculture, the barriers they face, and the potential solutions to harness the energy and creativity of the next generation of farmers.

### The importance of participation of pupils in agriculture

**Addressing the aging farming population:** One of the most critical reasons for youth engagement in agriculture is the aging farming population. In many countries, the majority of farmers are elderly, and the youth are increasingly migrating to urban areas in search of better opportunities. This demographic shift poses a significant threat to global food security. To sustain agricultural production and rural livelihoods, it is essential to encourage young people to take up farming.

**Technological innovation:** Youth bring fresh perspectives and a natural affinity for technology to the agricultural sector. They are more likely to embrace modern farming techniques, such as precision agriculture, biotechnology, and data-driven decision-making. Their familiarity with digital tools and social media can be leveraged to improve farming practices, market access, and knowledge sharing.

**Sustainable agriculture:** The youth are more aware of environmental issues and the importance of sustainability.

Engaging young people in agriculture can lead to the adoption of more sustainable farming practices, reducing the negative environmental impact of agriculture while ensuring long-term food production.

**Economic growth and job creation:** Agriculture offers significant potential for economic growth and job creation, especially in developing countries where the sector dominates the economy. Engaging youth in agriculture can stimulate economic development by creating opportunities in farming, agribusiness, and related industries.

### Barriers to youth engagement in agriculture

Despite the importance of youth engagement in agriculture, several barriers hinder their participation.

**Lack of access to land:** Land tenure issues, land fragmentation, and urbanization have limited young people's access to agricultural land, making it challenging for them to start farming.

**Limited access to finance:** Young farmers often face difficulties accessing affordable credit and financial resources to invest in agriculture. This lack of capital can hinder their ability to purchase inputs, improve infrastructure, and expand their operations.

**Inadequate education and training:** Many young people lack the necessary knowledge and skills for modern farming practices. Insufficient access to agricultural education and vocational training programs prevents them from effectively engaging in agriculture.

**Perception of agriculture:** Negative perceptions of agriculture as a labor-intensive, low-income profession discourage young people from pursuing careers in the sector.

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They often view agriculture as unattractive compared to urban employment opportunities.

**Lack of infrastructure:** Inadequate rural infrastructure, including roads, transportation, and storage facilities, can make it challenging for young farmers to access markets and sell their produce efficiently.

#### **Solutions to promote participation of pupils in agriculture**

**Land reforms and access:** Governments and stakeholders should implement land reforms to make land more accessible to young farmers. This includes providing secure land tenure, facilitating land consolidation, and creating land banks for youth.

**Financial support:** Financial institutions should offer tailored financial products and services designed to meet the specific needs of young farmers. This may include low-interest loans, grants, and subsidies for agricultural investments.

**Education and training:** Investments in agricultural education and vocational training programs are essential to equip young farmers with the knowledge and skills needed for modern agriculture. Public and private sector collaboration can facilitate the development of such programs.

**Changing perceptions:** Public awareness campaigns can be launched to change the perception of agriculture among young people. Highlighting the potential for entrepreneurship, innovation, and profitability in agriculture can make it a more attractive career choice.

**Infrastructure development:** Governments should invest in rural infrastructure to improve transportation, storage, and market access for young farmers. This can reduce post-harvest losses and enhance the competitiveness of agricultural products.

**Mentorship and networking:** Establishing mentorship programs that connect experienced farmers with young individuals interested in agriculture can provide valuable guidance and support. Additionally, creating youth agricultural networks can foster collaboration and knowledge sharing.

**Access to technology:** Ensuring access to modern agricultural technologies, including digital tools and data analytics, can empower young farmers to increase productivity and make informed decisions.

**Market access:** Developing efficient value chains and market linkages can help young farmers access local and international markets, expanding their income potential.