

WOMEN, YOUTH AND THE TRANSFORMATION OF THE AGRIFOOD SYSTEM

A contribution of the Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA) and the Universidade Federal Rural do Rio de Janeiro, represented by the researchers Elisa Guaraná de Castro, anthropologist and associate professor, and Luiza Dulci, economist and doctoral candidate, for the 2021 UNFSS.



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Introduction

The agrifood system includes the group of activities, landscapes and private and public actors connected with food production, transformation, distribution, consumption and waste. Food questions are interrelated and reflect economic, political, cultural and land ownership structures and have historical national and regional specificities. They include agricultural, industrial and service activities that complement and depend on each other.

The central question that guides this study is who are the subjects of the agrifood system and how are they affected by inequalities? More specifically, what is the contribution of women and young people¹ in this system? What are the questions of leadership, weaknesses and challenges that women and young people face? What transformations are necessary?

1. Different countries and international organizations identify young people in different age ranges. ECLAC considers the range of 15-29, while the UN and the Ibero-American Youth Organization (OIJ, 2005) identify youth as people between 15 and 24.

The following analysis shows the inequalities that affect the two specific groups, while at the same time identifying possibilities for change and for the construction of food systems on fairer and more sustainable bases from experiences now underway in different countries of the Americas.

Special attention is given to women and youth due to their centrality in guaranteeing food sovereignty in the present and the future. Although they both are part of the sustainable development goals (SDGs) and the 2030 Agenda, challenges still persist in terms of their participation and valuation in food systems, and in the full development of their capacities.

These concerns are shared by the Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA), working from a more inclusive, sustainable and equitable approach. Since its creation, the Institute has set up numerous agriculture support initiatives that seek to strengthen local territories and subjects, with an increasing emphasis on women and youth. This has become a core policy that currently orients IICA's four strategic goals and five programs for the 34 Member States. As many documents produced by the Institute show, the contemporary reality includes historical challenges in agricultural development, while at the same time new issues are emerging.² Climate change, and more recently, the Covid-19 pandemic have led to a rethink of the forms of production and consumption of food, goods and wealth. These factors also impose the need for good use and re-use and the construction of more resilient and sustainable systems, such as the principles that orient the bioeconomy. The confluence of crises—climate, economic, energy, food and water—affects the whole world, but different populations are unequally affected due to social markers of gender, race, class, generation and territory. In the agrifood system environment, the increase in demand for food and water reinforces the need for a new cycle of public policies. Questions such as healthier and more nutritional diets, increased productivity with social inclusion in rural areas and socioenvironmental justice are strategies that raise agriculture and its actors to global level.

The present study maintains that women and young people are indispensable agents of change in this process. Furthermore, initiatives are already underway which, if they are properly recognized, valued and supported, may transform food systems through justice and sustainability.

Following this introduction, the text examines the relevance of women and young people to food systems as they exist today. The text then focuses on the SDGs. Due to their broad scope, food systems are directly and indirectly connected with all 17 SDGs, but the goals and actions that involve and promote specifically women and young people are more restricted. In the fourth section, in line with the five Action Tracks that orient the 2021 UN Food Systems Summit, data is gathered and analyzed on the involvement of

2. Some of the recent studies that formulated those challenges are the following: *Desigualdade digital de gênero na América Latina e no Caribe* (Oxford University, IADB and IFAD, 2020) <https://repositorio.iica.int/handle/11324/12489>. *Conectividade rural na América Latina e no Caribe: uma ponte para o desenvolvimento sustentável em tempos de pandemia* (IICA, IADB and Microsoft, 2020) <https://repositorio.iica.int/handle/11324/12896>. *Digital literacy in rural areas: An indispensable condition to bridge the divide in Latin America and the Caribbean* (IICA, IADB and MICROSOFT, 2021) <https://repositorio.iica.int/handle/11324/14462>.

women and young people in food systems and good practices originating in the public and private sphere and civil society are identified which offer paths for change. Finally, recommendations and considerations are presented in line with the research agenda on the subject.

2

Gender and youth in food systems

In spite of all their potential and effective contribution to food systems, young people, women and youth are among the sectors most affected by hunger, both in rural areas and in cities. Although the human right to adequate food is recognized by the United Nations (FAO, 2006) and expressly referenced in the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Peasants (UNDROP), 2019 data indicate that 690 million people, 8.9% of the world population, suffer from hunger—a situation that was worsened due to the Covid-19 pandemic (FAO, IFAD, WHO, PMA and UNICEF, 2020).

This is in part due to the obstacles to the right to land. Women and young people have limited access to production conditions, especially access to land and income. Women in particular suffer from traditional laws and customs that prevent the share of inheritance and access to land in conditions equal to men. Among young people, the few laws or public policies that promote access to land are ineffective. From the perspective of the labor market and the generation of income, both segments tend to do more precarious work with lower pay.

2.1 Women in agrifood systems

Women are present in all the stages, sectors and activities of food systems. In all their diversity, they do most of the work in native seed protection,³ growing medicinal plants, producing healthy foods in allotments and productive gardens, and raising small animals. They continue to be responsible for most of the domestic chores and social reproduction. Despite this, they experience gender inequalities in wages and subordinate forms of participation in the labor market, and they are also victims of physical, sexual and psychological violence, the incidence of which increased considerably in the context of the Covid-19 pandemic (Campbell, 2020).

Data from 2018 indicate that seven out of ten people who suffer hunger in the world are women. In terms of land ownership, women own less than 15% of the land and less than 2% of registered rural properties. They receive only 10% of all global income, although they are responsible for two thirds of the work. In rural areas, 60% of homes where the woman is the head of the

3. Native seed recovery, production and improvement program of the Movimento de Mulheres Camponesas—MMC, among many other experiences (COLLET et al, 2015).

household are located on marginal land, without basic sanitation, supplies, or machinery for production. Furthermore, of the 194 member countries of the UN, 102 have laws and traditional practices that deny or hinder women's land rights. Nonetheless, women produce half of the world's food, and up to 80% in developing countries (IICA, 2018). This is due to the fact that women mostly return the fruits of their labor to their families and communities (IICA, 2018).

2.2 Youth in agrifood systems

Young people, also essentially diverse, carry with them the prospect of continuing rural traditions and way of life, while at the same time promoting change in rural spaces, forests and waters. They are more educated than their parents and grandparents, have greater predisposition to the use of technologies and sustainable management techniques, and are more interested in developing rural spaces beyond typical agricultural activities. Among the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean, there is a window of opportunity as a result of the demographic bonus (IICA, 2019a). Thus, the youth agenda must be addressed from the perspective of "generational integration" (Ramírez-Quiros, 2021, p.12), mutual learning and construction of quality of life.

Hunger and the lack of succession prospects are among the main reasons for the rural exodus among young people, who do not find the conditions necessary for producing on their parents' property, do not have the resources to acquire their own land and do not have access to agrarian reform policies. These and other questions make young people the proportionally largest contingent of rural/urban shift in Latin America and the Caribbean. Nonetheless, young people have consistently shown their desire to remain in the countryside, and in fact return to rural areas when they find favorable conditions for living and producing (Silva and Botelho, 2016; SNJ, 2014).

3

Agenda 2030: women and young people in the Sustainable Development Goals

The involvement of women and young people and attention to their problems are essential requisites for fulfilling every one of the SDGs, as CFS (2020) and CELAC (in Weizman, 2018) point out.

3.1 Women in the SDGs

International organizations point out gender equality as one of the most relevant economic and social factors preventing fulfillment of the SDGs (CFS, 2020; IICA, 2019b). Quality of life and the guarantee of rights for rural women depend on SDGs 1—eradication of poverty; 2—zero hunger and sustainable development; 3—health and wellbeing; 6—drinking water and sanitation; 8—decent work and economic growth; and 10—reduction of inequalities. SDG 5—gender equality, concentrates the main actions for overcoming gender inequalities, particularly inequalities among rural women (CFS, 2020).

3.2 Youth in the SDGs

Young people do not feature prominently in the SDGs, and young rural people are invisibilized even more. The generational pact and evaluation of living and working conditions of rural young people should be a priority strategy for fulfilling SDGs. More specifically, the following SDGs can be mentioned: SDG 1—eradication of poverty; 2—zero hunger and sustainable agriculture; 3—health and wellbeing; 4—quality education; 8—decent work and economic growth; 10—reduction of inequalities; and 12—responsible consumption and production. Another distinction can be found in SDG 13—action against global climate change, due to the threats that climate change poses to the new generations. Three priorities for young rural people are: 2—zero hunger and sustainable agriculture; 4—quality education; 8—decent work and economic growth.

4

Challenges for the construction of fair, inclusive and sustainable food systems: what paths are available to women and young people?

The contribution of women and young people to the transformation of the agrifood system can be made in different stages and moments of food's journey from the field to the table. This report presents experiences underway which form part of the five Action Tracks developed in preparation for the 2021 UN Food Systems Summit. The identification of inequalities and proposals concerning the role of women is present in all the Action Tracks, with an emphasis on Action Track 4. Young people are also the focus of AT4, however they do not appear in AT3 and have even less visibility in the other documents.

4.1. Women in the transformation of food systems

Action Track 1: The Regional Campaign for the Full Autonomy of Rural and Indigenous Women in Latin America and the Caribbean proposes to raise awareness of challenges and give visibility to the experiences of autonomy of rural, Afro-descendant and Indigenous women.⁴ One example is the Panamanian Government Project, supported by the FAO, which acts in 19 indigenous communities with the goal of revitalizing production while promoting food security.⁵ Attaining the supply of healthy foods for all through the transformation of food systems is a central concern of *Aliança Mulher Mãe Terra*,⁶ which seeks to guarantee land rights for women and food sovereignty. The proposal came from many young people in different countries of the world that make up the *Economía de Francisco y Clara*, called by Pope Francis in 2019, and is in tune with the debates held in 2018 at the W20 in Argentina.⁷ This meeting gave priority to rural women inactions to promote food security and made three main recommendations: i) investment and infrastructure to support rural women; ii) land access policies; and iii) the creation of the Global Fund for Rural Women 2030 (IICA, 2019b, p. 18-19).

There is a historic inequality in land access for men and women in Latin America. Although legislation varies, patriarchal logics persist in the forms of inheritance, traditional practices and land policies. Nevertheless, recent changes aim for greater equality and must be strengthened as basic conditions for food security (Deere and Leon, 2003). In Brazil, Law 38/2007 established the obligation to include women and men in the land registry to access the National Agrarian Reform Program (PNRA/INCRA). This change meant that land ownership among married women and women in a stable relationship rose from 23% to 72% between 2003 and 2015, and from 13% to 24% in the case of single mothers (IICA, 2018). In Bolivia, public policies increased women's access to land ownership from 9% to 46% in 2014 (Nobre and Hora, 2017, p.2). In terms of access to water, "The most critical conditions are found in Central America and the Caribbean. This condition affects rural areas more, placing 40% of the population in a vulnerable situation, that is, almost 11.5 million people, of which over 60% are women and girls." (Nobre and Hora, 2017, p.51).

Action Track 2: Women also play a key role in urban agriculture and in conscious consumption. Highlights include projects that reduce food waste through integral use, using circular agriculture and taking advantage of its

4. The #RuralWomen, women with rights campaign, launched by the FAO in 2018, is the result of the recommendations of the Thirteenth Regional Conference on Women, held in Montevideo in 2016, of the SDGs and of national experiences in Brazil and Argentina. See <http://www.fao.org/americas/publicaciones-audio-video/ruralwomen/en/> (consulted on 2 April 2021).

5. 2019 edition of the regional campaign #RuralWomen, women with rights. See <https://mujeresrurales.exposu-re.co/mujeres-rurales-y-alimentacion-saludable> (consulted on 2 April 2021).

6. See: <https://linktr.ee/agriejus> (consulted on 6 March 2021).

7. W20 is an organization that dialogues with G20 leaders on economic autonomy, empowerment and reduction of inequalities for the world's women. The W20 Argentina proposed a charter of priorities for rural women. G20 countries possess 60% of agricultural lands in the world and 80% of world food production; an impact promoted in those countries would have a global impact (IICA, 2019b).

potential for regeneration, closing the cycle of nutrients, returning organic material to the biosphere and improving soil. Initiatives such as food banks;⁸ the food waste competition *Pérdidas y desperdicios de alimentos: MercaDom 2017—Centro de Emprendimiento e Innovación* — Intec, Dominican Republic (Weitzman, 2018); the *Revolução dos Baldinhos*⁹; the Productive Gardens¹⁰; and the project Favela Orgânica¹¹ point to possible paths. To shorten distances between food producers and consumers, two Brazilian initiatives stand out for family farming, based on associations and cooperatives in the public field: the Food Procurement Program (PAA)¹² and the National School Food Program (PNAE). The PNAE benefits children and young people directly as the food is used for school meals. In Mexico, following the PNAE's example, the Sustainable Schools program was created, with four central tenets: inter-sectoral coordination and social participation; food and nutrition education; improvement of school infrastructure; and incorporation of suitable, healthy options in keeping with local culture. The project is aimed at women from local communities and schools.¹³

Digital technologies play an increasingly important role in ties between food consumers and producers. However, gender equalities can also be observed here. Although women have a higher average education than men, many have fewer chances to access information and communication technologies (ICTs). These barriers impact commercialization, access to information and political participation, as well as increasing social isolation, aspects that were analyzed in an IICA survey (2020), in which gender inequalities were identified in access to mobile phones in twenty-three countries of Latin America and the Caribbean.

Action Track 3: Access to funding and productive resources are among the main factors affecting gender equality in the context of family agrifood production. Indigenous and Afro-descendant women are even more affected. Nevertheless, some positive experiences stand out, such as the National

8. Food banks were set up in different countries in Latin America, receiving products from subsidized purchases or charity forms of organization and distributing for free or at a low cost for low income populations. In Brazil, these are regulated by the Brazilian Food Bank Network—RBBA, Rede Brasileira de Bancos de Alimentos—and receive foods from food procurement programs, such as the National Food Acquisition Program and the National School Food Acquisition Program. See <https://www.gov.br/cidadania/pt-br/aceso-a-informacao/carta-de-servicos/desenvolvimento-social/inclusao-social-e-produtiva-rural/programa-banco-de-alimentos> (consulted on 15 March 2021).

9. The *Revolução dos Baldinhos* is an example of an associative experience that brought communities together to fight food waste. With 150 families currently registered, it promotes the collection and treatment of food waste to combat rat infestation with the production of organic fertilizer and maintenance of school allotments. See <https://lincsocial.wordpress.com/2020/08/12/revolucao-dos-baldinhos/> (consulted 15 March 2021).

10. Productive backyards have multiplied as a method for promoting healthy eating in rural areas and the city, often integrated with school allotment projects. The appreciation of traditional forms of planting associated with new technologies drives what before was an invisible and unvalued job for women (Rocha, 2017)—see *Projeto Quintais Produtivos of the Articulação Semiárido Brasileiro* (ASA): <http://www.asabrasil.org.br>. The productive farms initiative is the result of the coordination of the Fundo Casa Socioambiental, the Fundação SOS Mata Atlântica and the Associação dos Catadores de Marisco da Ilha Grande do Piauí: <https://casa.org.br/quintais-produtivos-uma-legitima-ciranda-agroecologica/> (consulted on 15 March 2021).

11. Initiative created in 2011 in the Babilônia favela in Rio de Janeiro. It focuses on the full use of foods (down to the stem), through the promotion of workshops, courses and talks on the subject. It also organizes urban agriculture working groups in the favelas of Rio de Janeiro, with a focus on food sovereignty for women. See: <https://favelaorganica.com.br/pt/> (consulted on 16 March 2021).

12. The Direct Purchase with Simultaneous Donation modality accepts a greater variety of products and, therefore, is the most used, directly or indirectly, by women who historically tend to produce a greater variety of foods in allotments and backyards (Siliprandi and Cintrão, 2011).

13. 2019 edition of the regional campaign Rural women, women with rights. See <https://mujeresrurales.exposu-re.co/mujeres-rurales-y-alimentacion-saludable> (consulted 2 April 2021).

Program for Strengthening Family Farming—PronafMulher¹⁴—in Brazil. In Colombia, women can access microloans offered by Bancamía, Fundación Microfinanzas BBVA, and the Microloan Program for Basic Adaptation in Ecosystems (MEbA). This program established a model cooperative farm in conjunction with UN Environment at the Colegio ICAM (Institute of Agricultural and Environmental Sciences), which has diverse technologies for the adaptation and mitigation of the effects of climate change on crops, and technologies for improving productivity.¹⁵

Participative certification systems also support nature positive models. In Brazil, one of the most successful experiences is that of **Mulheres Organizadas em Busca de Igualdade** (MOBI), made up of women farmers from the Family Farming Cooperative of Poço Fundo e Região (Coopfam),¹⁶ who produce Women's Organic Coffee. The **Quebradeiras de Coco Babaçu** organized in the northern and northeastern regions of Brazil, created an agroexport model based on associations that generate income and promote the preservation of babassu plantations.¹⁷

Action Track 4: The Global Gender Gap Report (WEF, 2021) indicates that economic inequality and unequal opportunities for women rank second on the list of the five categories of inequity analyzed, only behind political representation. Only 58% of countries show clear advances towards gender equity in this index. AT4 focuses on the “structural invisibility of gender questions in rural spaces.” Although women do many jobs, agricultural work is, in general, seen as an extension of the home and, therefore, it is not considered or valued as a productive activity (Jalil, 2019). According to data gathered in the ECLAC survey between 2007 and 2014 on time use and remuneration for work done, rural women continue to have a paid and unpaid working day three times longer than in the case of men, and in Mexico a working week for a woman is as much as 80 hours, of which 67 is unpaid work, compared to 70 hours for men, with only 25 hours of unpaid work (Nobre and Hora, 2017).¹⁸ The series of regional and hemispheric forums on rural women and equity in the context of the Covid-19 pandemic in the Americas, promoted by IICA in May 2020, highlighted the fundamental role that women play in the fight against the pandemic, as they are responsible for the majority of the activities of care and unpaid work, the production of food for self-consumption and the diversity of foods consumed by the population. Because of all this, they have a large work burden and are exposed to numerous risks in periods of crisis and instability.

14. The Pronaf was created in 1996 and in 2004 the Pronaf Mulher line was established (Heredia and Cintrão, 2006).

15. 2019 edition of the regional campaign #RuralWomen, women with rights. See <https://mujeresrurales.exposu-re.co/la-importancia-del-acceso-a-servicios-financieros> (consulted on 2 April 2021).

16. See: <https://coopfam.com.br> (Consulted on 10 March 2021).

17. The babassu breakers (*Quebradeiras de Coco Babaçu*) are over 300,000 women in five Brazilian states (Nobre and Hora, 2017). The transformation of babassu plantations into Resex (Extractive Reserves) and the Free Babassu Act (Act No. 231/2007) are some of the achievements of this process (Antunes, 2006).

18. Research carried out with data from Brazil, Colombia, Ecuador, Honduras, Mexico, Peru and Uruguay. ECLAC, *División de Asuntos de Género, sobre la base de tabulaciones especiales de las encuestas de uso de tiempo de los respectivos países*.

This set of inequalities and violence restricts rural women's access to programs and policies. In receiving only one tenth of the technical assistance that men receive, women's productivity is between 20% and 30% lower than men's (IICA, 2019b). An interesting experience designed to bridge this gap is **Tejiendo Redes**, a program for artisanal fishing women in Chile which provides business training, technical assistance and equipment for four lines of production: gastronomy; adding value to marine products; coastal tourism; and local identity crafts.¹⁹

Action Track 5: Participation is a right established by the UNDROP.²⁰ For women, participation is a way of tackling patriarchal relationships that exist in families, associations and cooperatives, and in public spaces. It also has positive impacts on the levels of violence. Although intrafamilial violence and sexual division of work persist, women who form part of social movements report that they have more confidence and self-esteem in relationships with their husbands and more autonomy to manage their time and finances (Castro, Dulci and Carvalho, 2020; Antunes, 2006).

There is a great number of local, national and regional experiences of organization and participation of women in general, and of rural and indigenous women in particular. Relevant cases include the Conference on Rural Women in Latin America and the Caribbean (Brasilia, 2014), the 7th Continental Meeting of Indigenous Women (Guatemala, 2015) and the 13th Regional Conference on Women (Montevideo, 2016). In Chile, the **Mesa de la Mujer Rural**, with the participation of 19 organizations of rural and indigenous women, promotes networks that increase access to spaces of dialogue with government organizations to be able to submit their demands and difficulties, thus accelerating the response of government authorities and guaranteeing forms of social control.²¹ Equity in participation and formal recognition of work and rights have been part of the agenda of the Brazilian trade union movement since the 1980s (Bordalo, 2011). Since 2000, the **Marcha das Margaridas** has mobilized women all over the country, and diverse social movements have been conceived to submit a political agenda to the Federal Government (Silva, 2008). In Chile, female seasonal workers organized under the National Association of Rural and Indigenous Women—ANAMURI (Nobre and Hora, 2017). In Colombia, the Mobilization of Black Women from the North of the Cauca for the Care of Life and the Defense of Ancestral Territories held a major demonstration in 2014.

4.2 Youth in the transformation of food systems

Action Track 1: The question of land is fundamental for rural youth organizations. The issue formed part of the discussions in the context of the

19. 2019 edition of the regional campaign #RuralWomen, women with rights. See <https://mujeresrurales.exposu-re.co/acceso-a-capacitacion> (consulted on 2 April 2021).

20. Article 15 states "the right to participate in decision-making processes on food and agriculture policy and the right to healthy and adequate food produced through ecologically sound and sustainable methods that respect their cultures."

21. 2019 edition of the regional campaign #RuralWomen, women with rights. See <https://mujeresrurales.exposu-re.co/cultivando-liderazgos> (consulted 2 April 2021).

virtual forums *Juventudes rurales construyendo la nueva agricultura post COVID-19*, organized by IICA in 2020, and this is also the objective of a recent initiative by the Uruguayan government. The *Tierra de Jóvenes* program,²² launched in 2019, aims to assign lands to groups of young people, a measure that strengthens youth associations. In Brazil, the *Línea Nossa Primeira Terra* initiative, related to the National Program of Territorial Credit (PNCR), remained in force for some years in which it awarded lower interest rates to young people for buying land.

Action Track 2: New Technologies and digital media can become important allies for shortening distances²³ and cutting out intermediaries. This opens up two areas of opportunity: i) qualification and training; and ii) sales and generation of income. Access is also increased to training content and, at the same time, platforms are created for the diffusion of products and to connect food producers and consumers. Young people have greater potential for full access and use of these tools, due to their familiarity with the technical aspect, their language abilities and the time they spend online. The virtual community *Yo, joven y rural*²⁴ is a digital network of rural young people of the National Rural Youth Network of Chile, supported by the Institute of Agricultural Development (INDAP) of the Chilean Agriculture Ministry.

In order to bring food producers and consumers closer together, three US experiences stand out for specifically supporting young people: Denver Youth Farmers' Market Coalition,²⁵ Grow NYC²⁶ and Youth Farm Box.²⁷ In Ecuador, the *Machete y Garabato*²⁸ initiative brings together students from the agronomy degree course at the Universidad Técnica de Quevedo and young people from local communities who attend the Centro Agrícola Cantonal de Quevedo. This training and agroecological production work includes the recovery of the Maculillo River and contributes to the production of healthy foods, sold on the free market in the city of Quevedo.

Action Track 3: As in the case of women, young people all over the world face challenges in financing youth production. Some countries have specific initiatives, such as the credit line *Emprende Joven Rural*, awarded by the INDAP in Chile. Brazil also has the *Pronaf Jovem* line.

22. This program was the result of a partnership between the National Youth Institute, the Ministry of Social Development, the General Office of Rural Development of the Ministry of Livestock, Agriculture and Fisheries and the National Colonization Institute. See: <https://www.gub.uy/ministerio-ganaderia-agricultura-pesca/comunicacion/noticias/llamado-tierra-jovenes-es-primer-paso-apunta-romper-inercia> (consulted on 3 March 2021).

23. In this respect, the concept of food miles (Coley, Hoard, Winter, 2009) shows the enormous distances that food travels from the field to the table, with a direct impact on climate change.

24. See: <http://yojovenyrural.cl> (consulted 3 March 2021).

25. A product of the alliance between Denver Urban Gardens, Slow Food Denver and Denver public schools, the initiative was conceived in 2008, using the school gardens to grow food, promote sales skills and involve communities in cooking classes, for better use of foods and better dietary health.

26. Based in New York, promoting school allotments, local farmers markets, direct purchases from migrant farmers and activities related to recycling and food use. Originally known as Youth markets. See <https://www.grownyc.org/farmstands> (consulted 3 March 2021).

27. Box of products from young farmers of the Berkeley Farmers' Market, located in California, USA. Promoted by the Youth Environmental Academy of the Ecology Center, the project was developed in the context of the Covid-19 pandemic. See <https://ecologycenter.org/blog/youth-environmental-academy-announces-farm-box-pilot-program/> (consulted 3 March 2021).

28. See: <https://www.porlatierra.org/docs/05c68d34f221adcb473cddca2da8d81b.pdf> (consulted on 4 March 2021).

Another crucial aspect regarding the economy of scale is knowledge and its applicability. In this respect, three Brazilian initiatives have had a direct and positive effect on the training of rural young people in recent decades: i) the process of expansion and internalization of public universities and federal technical education institutes;²⁹ ii) the establishment of the Network of Alternance Training Centers (Ceffas)³⁰; and iii) the National Education Program on Agricultural Reform (*Pronera*).³¹ In Puerto Rico, the experience of the Puerto Rican Organization of Ecological Agriculture³² shows how it is possible to involve young people in the process of environmental restoration of territories, combining learning techniques that increase productivity and the productive scale on small lands, using the peasant-to-peasant method. Programs and initiatives such as these are important due to the high levels of education inequality observed in the region. Of the rural youth of Latin America and the Caribbean, only 56% of students from poor families attend secondary school and only 9% access higher education (OECD, ECLAC and CAF 2017). Guaranteeing the right to education in rural communities implies the use of methodologies and educational materials adapted to the context of those territories.

Action Track 4: To promote equitable ways of life, the structural challenges of the labor market must be addressed. Although the educational level of rural young people is higher than that of previous generations,³³ they enter the labor market earlier and in more precarious jobs with lower salaries than their urban peers. According to 2019 data from the ECLAC Youth Observatory for Latin America and the Caribbean (JUVELAC), in Latin America there is a significant proportion of young people who work in the informal sectors of the economy. This trend is more pronounced in rural areas (61%) than in urban areas (37%).

Many of them do not have a work contract or have temporary contracts “in highly demanding jobs, receiving low pay and with limited access to social protection services, which is connected to working in informal, precarious or seasonal jobs” (Guiskin, 2019, p.31).³⁴ Lower levels of trade union membership are also observed, in comparison with older people who themselves have low levels of trade union organization (Martine, 2016, *apud* Nobre and Hora, 2017). Data from Latin America and the Caribbean in recent decades show a decrease in unpaid work by young people on family properties and an increase in non-farm rural employment (NFRE). Nevertheless, 51.3% of

29. With the expansion of the public higher education system in Brazil, 18 federal universities and 173 university campuses were created, as well as 360 technical education institutes between 2003 and 2014, which took the number of students from 505,000 to 932,000 in the same period.

30. The *Rede Ceffas* consists of schools that use alternance teaching developed specifically for rural young people. In 2015, there were 268 educational centers of the *Rede Ceffas* in the country, distributed in 20 states.

31. The *Pronera* was created in 1998 to raise the level of schooling of beneficiaries of agrarian reform. The program provided support for 167,000 students under the modality of Education for Young People and Adults (EJA), and educated 1765 specialized students, 9116 at middle level and 5347 at higher level. See https://www.ipea.gov.br/portal/images/stories/PDFs/relatoriospesquisa/160630_relatorio_o-programa-nacional.pdf (consulted on 21 February 2021).

32. See: <https://www.facebook.com/organizacionboricua/> (consulted on 4 March 2021).

33. From 1990 to 2016, the literacy rates for Latin America and the Caribbean increased from 85% to 94% (SITEAL, IIPE, UNESCO).

34. The comparison between urban and rural young people indicates that, at the start of their working life (15-19 years), the wage differences are less pronounced, but take on great relevance in the 20-24 years range, and this marks inequalities and opportunities for the rest of their lives (Guiskin, 2019).

women and 29.9% of young people who work in agriculture are not paid for their work (Nobre and Hora, 2017).

The absence of public policies is a historical reality for rural young people. In order to bridge these gaps and guarantee rights, the Specialized Meeting on Family Farming of MERCOSUR (REAF) enacted Recommendation no. 07/2017 on public policies for the rural youth of the subcontinent (REAF, 2017).

Action Track 5: The creation of a sense of belonging goes hand-in-hand with the strengthening of participative spaces and processes. In the case of young people in particular, this process strengthens perspectives of belonging in rural areas associated with the will to transform rural spaces (Fernando, 2012). The construction of the National Plan for Rural Youth and Succession in Brazil³⁵ constitutes an important experience in the production of public policies based on an alliance between the State and civil society. Signed as a presidential decree of the federal government, the plan includes five aspects: i) land and territory; ii) work and income; iii) rural education; iv) quality of life; and v) participation, communication and citizenship.

The formation of youth networks and the promotion of exchanges is an important strategy for the coordination of youth and the construction of interterritorial alliances. The Latin American Network of Rural Young People (Relajur) was one of the first experiences at regional level. The Chilean INDAP has a formal forum of citizen participation for rural young people with the objective of promoting exchanges between rural young people and accompanying the development of rural communities in the country.³⁶ Notable elements in North America include the National Farmers Union of Canada with a network dedicated to young farmers called Young Agrarians.³⁷

5

Recommendations and considerations on challenges and paths to follow

The processes and initiatives mentioned above show that the paths for the materialization of new food systems are already being marked out by private entities, local and national governments and by civil society, with the cooperation of international organizations throughout the American continent. The full development of women's and young people's capacities in the food systems requires, therefore, coordinated, integrated and comprehensive actions, on different geographic scales—local, national, regional and global—and for sustainability to form part of economic, political and environmental plans.

35. See https://issuu.com/assessoriaidejuventudemda/docs/publica_o_site_mda (consulted on 6 March 2021).

36. At present the program has 16 regional roundtables, 35 area roundtables and 5 communal roundtables, involving the participation of 665 young people connected to social organizations.

37. See: <https://youngagrarians.org> (consulted 4 March 2021).

Three pillars must orientate this strategy: i) guarantee of rights; ii) climate change agenda; and iii) the promotion of public policies constructed with social participation.

Rights must guarantee and go beyond the access to the land, natural and productive resources and quality of life for women and youth. Just as important as the creation of new rights is the enforcement of those already established, given that all over the world an imbalance continues to be observed between established formal rights and the persistence of effective inequalities (Miguel and Biroli, 2014). With regards to women and youth, international treaties and declarations must be respected, such as the UN Declaration on the Rights of Peasants and Other People Working in Rural Areas (UNDROP) and the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People (UNDRIP). With specific reference to Indigenous peoples, the Ibero-American Action Plan for the Implementation of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples³⁸ commits in its goal no. 2 to “include the perspective of indigenous peoples, with special consideration for women and youth, in the national plans for implementing and monitoring the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs.”³⁹

As indicated in AT4, climate change is the central focus of our era, and we find ourselves at a decisive moment. Although the relationship between climate change and inequalities reinforces certain patterns in a vicious circle, it is possible to transform it into a virtuous circle through actions dedicated to increasing resilience and promoting the well-being of human beings and nature. The agrifood system plays a major role in the climate change agenda, at all stages of production, transformation, distribution, consumption and availability. The need to involve rural and urban women and young people in the climate change agenda was recognized by COP 22, the United Nations Conference on Climate Change, in 2016. The Sunrise Movement⁴⁰ of the United States is one mobilization experience that can be highlighted, contributing to the enactment of Resolution 109,⁴¹ better known as the Green New Deal. Many potentialities address the question of decent work and the so-called green jobs for rural women and youth and focus on aspects of prevention, mitigation and adaptation to the changes underway (Nebuloni and Gardiner, 2017).

The emphasis on public policies is based on understanding the food system as a common good, at the service of people and, therefore, the object of public and state regulation. The guiding principle of the 2030 Agenda is to “Leave no one behind.”⁴² It is important to ensure a “real inclusion and multi-actor perspective to achieve equity and equality” (IICA, 2019, p.2). In this respect, instead of being considered vulnerable, women and young people must be

38. Signed in Antigua, Guatemala, 5 April 2018.

39. See: <https://oij.org/no-dejar-nadie-atras-pueblos-indigenas-y-la-agenda-2030-en-los-paises-de-iberoamerica/> (consulted on 2 March 2021).

40. See: <https://www.sunrisemovement.org/?ms=SunriseMovement-WeAreTheClimateRevolution> (consulted 6 March 2021).

41. See: <https://www.congress.gov/116/bills/hres109/BILLS-116hres109ih.pdf> (consulted 6 March 2021).

42. All over the continent there is a “strong presence of nongovernmental organizations, religious organizations and/or community groups that work on particular youth issues, but there are few structures specifically for young people with goals, agendas and strategies with an impact on public policies. There is a clear lack of spaces where young people play a leading role in taking decisions on territorial powers” (IICA, 2019, p.6).

perceived as strategic and they must be supported based on their diversity and potential.

Recommendations

The following recommendations require coordination with governments, private initiative, civil society, research institutes, universities and international organizations which prioritize women and young people of family and peasant farming, and agro-extractive communities, Indigenous peoples and Afro-descendants.

Official statistical data: the invisibility of women and young people is due to a great extent to the lack of data and analysis of their work and living conditions. For this it is necessary to:

- Collect data and construct suitable indicators, using participative methodologies which complement approaches focused exclusively on the income⁴³ of people and countries;
- Collect and analyze data disaggregated by gender and age whose divulgation allows the creation, management and monitoring of public policies and the orientation of corporate strategies.

Social participation of women and youth—Creation of participative spaces with representation of women and young people, that effectively promote the exchange and active participation of social subjects in public and private spaces. Strengthening of forms of territorial management that respect the diversity of women and young people. Creation or strengthening of:

- Tripartite spaces such as: 1) Councils and conferences in Brazil that take place in the territories, connected with the States and at federal level; 2) Territorial associations, with experiences of specific organization in gender and youth; 3) the ILO's Decent Work Agenda, which establishes tripartite forums (governments, employers and employees) to define labor questions and related conflicts.
- Actions that promote leadership and contribute to the reduction of inequalities in the representation of women and young people at local level, in spaces of governmental and parliamentary representation, at municipal, state/county and national level.

Accountability with participation of women and youth—Transparency and social control are fundamental elements for the construction of sustainable spaces and processes. Therefore, they must be taken as strategic principles and habitual practices of public, private and civil society actors, ensuring the broader participation of women and young people.

43. The ILO proposes analytical measures in this respect, including: i) forms of obtaining an income for unpaid work, done mainly by women; ii) indicators of externalities, especially ecological ones; and iii) indicators related to the distribution and equity of economic growth (ILO, 2019).

Coordination of actions to value the participation of women and youth—

The design of food systems implies holistic, comprehensive and integrated visions of subjects, landscapes and activities. In this regard, it implies going beyond the concept of the food chain focused exclusively on a specific food/productive sector. Women and young people must be seen as part of a whole. Food systems must be able to value and boost the heterogeneity of diets and food cultures.

Development of knowledge and technologies to reduce generational and gender inequalities—

Access to ICTs is fundamental for any proposal of progress towards new agrifood systems, and for this it is necessary to:

- Promote intergenerational ties to bridge the gap in the appropriation of new technologies, as various experiences of production and sales showed in the context of the Covid-19 pandemic;
- Broaden coverage and quality of rural connectivity for women and youth, which contributes to the formation of knowledge networks that involve the state, the markets, civil society and research institutions, with a potential positive impact on the increase of agricultural and agro-extractive productivity and production;
- Increase access to contextualized schooling and continuous education, through the coordination of funding of productive projects for women and young people.

Income, credit and development to increase access for women and youth—

Funding, access to resources and the improvement of income from paid work for women and young people requires a broad articulation of public actors, financial agents and companies' compliance with international agreements. It is important to promote and/or create:

- Direct credit for women and young people, individuals, cooperatives or associative experiences;
- Credit policies accompanied by lines of support for production run by women and young people in a situation of poverty, without financial guarantees, and in the stage prior to obtaining a bank loan. Such policies must also offer free technical assistance and be oriented towards structuring sustainable productive systems.

Access to land, means of production and commercialization to broaden access for women and youth—

Promoting the right to land, natural resources, means of production and commercialization, with a focus on socioenvironmental justice, through governmental actions with the support of international organizations.

Sustainability, security, food sovereignty, and quality of life valuing the inclusion of women and youth—

New agrifood systems urge us to advance towards an ecological transition that promotes harmony and global, regional, national and local actions, and which at the same time demands:

- Availability of incentives and state subsidies for the ecological transition of food system companies, involving aspects of energy, use of resources and adequate availability, as well as the increase of contracts of decent work for women and youth;
- Promotion of short commercialization circuits, with a view to reducing transport and distribution costs and the generation of greenhouse gases and stimulating the local economy with the participation of women and young people;
- Full use of urban and rural territories to produce healthy foods, broadening the participation of women and young people;
- Valuing and promoting sustainable initiatives of traditional peoples and communities, guaranteeing their rights to the land and living conditions, giving priority to collective/associative constructions of women and young people;
- Promotion of good practices and life values, with a focus on access to goods and services in rural territories to provide integral attention for women and young people in family and peasant farming, agro-extractive, Indigenous peoples and Afro-descendants.

6

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