WORLD SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT SUMMIT 2022

TOWARDS A RESILIENT PLANET: ENSURING A SUSTAINABLE AND EQUITABLE FUTURE

February 16-18, 2022

THE ENERGY AND RESOURCES INSTITUTE
Creating Innovative Solutions for a Sustainable Future

The Food and Land Use Coalition
India Country Platform

Breaking Barriers: Youth and Agriculture
16th February (Wednesday), 11:30 AM-1:00 PM (IST)

About the World Sustainable Development Summit (WSDS)

The World Sustainable Development Summit (WSDS) is the annual flagship Track II initiative of The Energy and Resources Institute (TERI). Instituted in 2001, in 2021, the Summit series marked 20 years in its journey of making 'sustainable development' a globally shared goal. Over the past two decades, the Summit platform has pioneered conversations by bringing together governments, scholars, corporates, youth groups, thought leaders, and civil society representatives from across the world. The present state of planetary health and humanitarian crises calls for revisiting the agenda around global action and equity. The 21st edition of the WSDS is being held under the umbrella theme of **'Towards a Resilient Planet: Ensuring a Sustainable and Equitable Future'** from 16th to 18th February 2022 in a virtual format.

About the Thematic Track: Breaking Barriers: Youth and Agriculture

Introduction

Agriculture has made tremendous progress since the Green Revolution, which more or less emerged as a technological solution to meet the challenges of feeding India's population in the 1960s. However, the intensive use of land and related resources has raised serious concerns about land degradation and unsustainable and inequitable use of water, particularly groundwater for irrigation. In recent years, the agriculture sector has been facing several challenges, including declining farm profitability, depletion of natural resources, resurgence of pests and diseases, global warming, climate change, and all of these are posing potential and serious threats to the sustainable agricultural production. Addressing this will mean building the capabilities and skills for advancing innovation, diversification, commercialization, sustainability and increased efficiency across the value chain.

Skilling and Engaging Youth in Food Systems

With 35% of the Indian population in 15–35 years age group and 75% of those residing in rural areas agriculture remains the dominant source of youth employment. As per the 12th Annual Status of Education Report (2017), a significant proportion of youth aged 14–18 years are working (42%), regardless of whether they are enrolled in formal education or not. Of these, 79% work in agriculture, almost all on their own family's farm. Even under the most optimistic scenarios, non-farm and urban sectors are not expected to be able to absorb more than two-thirds of youth labour market. For the growth and development of agriculture in India, it is important to motivate and encourage the youth towards this sector, where new technologies and innovative farming practices have the potential to enhance the sector's productivity and effectiveness. To reap the demographic dividend of the youth bulge, agriculture holds potential to provide employment opportunities for the youth if supported with a range of skills and knowledge – agricultural, financial, entrepreneurial – as well as increased investment and conducive institutional and policy environment. A recent scoping study report (2021) of The Energy and Resources Institute (TERI) and Food and Land Use Coalition (FOLU) highlight the varying levels of capabilities and skills requirements across the agriculture and allied sectors from the perspective of sustainable food and land-use systems.

Youth can play an important role in facing the challenges on access, availability and use of food with more population growth, urbanization, globalization and climate change ahead. Potential opportunities to improve engagement with youth in agriculture, includes focusing on sustainable food systems, which includes production, nutrition, consumption, food safety, food quality, reducing food losses and waste, and building sustainable systems that are able to conserve natural resources. Climate smart agriculture – which involves adapting and mitigating, and managing risks around agriculture due to climate change implies a lot of new skills required for the sector. Furthermore, focusing across the entire food value chain, rather than the prevailing bias towards upstream production offers opportunities for innovation and entrepreneurship.

About the session

With the vision of diversifying the agricultural sector, modifying the distribution system, and intervening into the consumption segment, with cross-cutting issues of livelihoods, combating climate change impact, inclusions, and SDG achievement, FOLU India partner institutions including TERI, WRI India, CEEW and RRAN are working towards the critical transitions required to transform food and land use in India. By bringing together key stakeholders including youth voices to engage in constructive dialogues and action to strengthen sustainability of India's food and land-use systems, TERI and FOLU India aspires to create a fresh and uninhibited perspective around challenges and opportunities relating to the development of knowledge, skills and capacity for youth in agriculture. The thematic session would highlight the opportunities to better engage youth in agriculture and explore the nexus of youth, innovation, and agriculture for advancing innovation, diversification, commercialization, sustainability and increased efficiency across the value chain to address some of the key questions below.

Key questions

1. What are the challenges that impair sustained engagement of youth in the agriculture sector?
2. How can agriculture and food system be made a more attractive choice for careers highlighting both on-farm and off-farm activities?
3. What mechanisms are required to foster innovation and entrepreneurship amongst youth?
4. How can need-based quality education and training be seamlessly imparted?