



# Empowering the Next Generation: Celebrating International Youth Day by Engaging Youth in Agriculture

Basu Anand<sup>1</sup>, Bikram Barman<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Ph.D. Research Scholar, Department of Agricultural Extension and Communication, NMCA, NAU, Navsari, Gujarat-396450,

<sup>2</sup>Ph.D. Research Scholar, Division of Agricultural Extension, ICAR-Indian Agricultural Research Institute, New Delhi – 110012.

## How to Cite this article

Anand and Barman 2024. Empowering the Next Generation: Celebrating International Youth Day by Engaging Youth in Agriculture. *Sabujeema-An International Multidisciplinary e-Magazine*. 4(9): 47-51



## Abstract

Young men and women are contributors to the agri-food system as paid workers, as unpaid family labourers, as self-employed entrepreneurs, and as members of cooperatives. International Youth Day is celebrated each year in August and provides an opportunity to recognize young people's contributions, both struggles and promise. The 2024 celebration entitled "From Clicks into Progress: Youth Digital Pathways for Sustainable Development" highlights how digital technologies, including mobile phones and AI, are reshaping agriculture in ways that intersect explicitly with numerous United Nations, Sustainable Development Goals (SDG).

**Key Words:** International Youth Day, SDG, Progress, Youth

## Introduction

International Youth Day, established on August 12, 1999 by the UN General Assembly following the World Conference of Ministers of Youth in Lisbon, highlights the pivotal role of youth in shaping our future. Each year, this day address's themes relevant to youth and sustainable development. The 2024 theme, "From Clicks to Progress: Youth Digital Pathways for Sustainable Development," underscores the transformative role of digital technology in agriculture. In 2022, internet users aged 15-24 were three times more numerous than other age groups. Engaging youth in agriculture is crucial for meeting SDG targets and creating resilient food systems, especially as the global population is projected to reach 8.6 billion by 2030. China and India, the most populous



countries, are expected to significantly impact global dynamics. International Youth Day serves as a platform to raise awareness about youth issues and promote their involvement in education, climate action, and other critical areas (United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, n.d.; United Nations, 2017; Prashar, 2024).

It is essential to involve the youth in agriculture because they are the ones spending most of their time working in the farms in Africa, Asia, and Latin America. The younger age groups are widely used - aged 15-17 years but they often migrate to other vocations during later teens and twenties, returning to farming around 35 years of age after acquiring land. The Asian and Latin American youth are more extensively involved in farm wage work than African youth. (Wittman *et al.*, 2021)

According to the Agrifood Youth Employment and Engagement Study, despite ongoing agricultural transformation, farming is still core to employment and economic growth in such countries as Nigeria, Rwanda, and Tanzania. Over the last two decades, more than 80.00% increase in employment due to agriculture has taken place across sub-Saharan Africa, where both the youth bulge and pressures in the labour market have been the key drivers. While farming continues to be the

largest employment source for rural communities, food system jobs off of the farm continue to grow; most of these are being created around urban areas. The COVID-19 pandemic has underscored some vulnerabilities: young people have been especially hard hit in food processing and distribution; primary farming jobs have been less affected. (HLPE, 2021).

Digital literacy introduces young farmers to data-driven innovations such as hydroponics and big data that could potentially enhance management, efficient farm input use, and yields while opening new ways for market accessibility. Digital literacy connects conventional and current methods of agriculture production. Community involvement is yet another aspect adopted in the involvement of youth in agriculture, whereas the youths are left in charge to manage projects involving the cooperative farms and training institutions. This facilitates the linkages between farmers and consumers, and even policy makers towards innovation development and growth of the local economy. The youngsters are also involved in sustainable agriculture by applying organic farming, the use of precision techniques, and irrigation using solar power, while joining hands with environmental NGOs for the development of such sustainable agricultural practices.



## **Strategies, Functions of Stakeholders, and Effective Engagement of the Youth in Agriculture**

Such inclusion of the youth in agriculture possibly can be created by highlighting various career profiles, awareness campaigns, revision of education programs in order to make them modern, resource support with mentorship for young farmers, and integration of innovation technologies. In this respect, the cooperation of government, industry, and educational institutions becomes necessary with a view to establishing favourable policies, training in practical aspects, and elaboration of curricula relevant to the interest of young people in agriculture.

**Successful Initiatives:** The Youth Co:Lab National Innovation Dialogue was put into place by the UNDP in association with the Citi Foundation and brought into the spotlight promising AgriTech solutions and innovations. In an attempt to empower the youth contributors of the Asia-Pacific region into active players for the growth and development of economies toward the advancement of SDG goals, the event was facilitated by Atal Innovation Mission and NITI Aayog.

## **Agriculture Fintech and Insurtech for small and marginal farmers**

## **Greenpod Labs: Deepak Rajmohan**

GreenPod Labs is an agri-biotech start-up based out of Chennai, founded in 2019 by Deepak Rajmohan and Vijay Anand. It tends to greater fresh produce loss in India alone, estimated at more than \$12 billion annually. Backed by Indian Angel Network and Rockstart, it is currently working on a few cost-effective storage solutions with biotech packaging that claims to increase the shelf life of the perishable items by as much as 40% with minimal reliance on cold storage. New funding will further boost R&D and expansion of the product portfolio aimed at reducing food wastage by transforming the way produce is preserved. (Entrepreneur India. (n.d.)).

## **Innovative solutions for Indigenous groups and tribal communities**

### **Richa Shukla - Scarlet Blinks Aroma Therapy Private Limited**

Scarlett Blinks, under the baton of Richa Shukla, is a cutting-edge wellness company specializing in organic aromatherapy goods for holistic physical and mental well-being. Recognized by its eco-friendliness and sourcing ethics, the company merged the conventional with the modern to carve its niche as a leading brand of essential oils for lifestyles globally on the road to better health.



## Case studies of Some Other Start Up Related to Agriculture and Allied Sectors

**Agrowave:** To mitigate the challenges faced by farmers while selling their products, Anu Meena established Agrowave in 2017, having grown up in Manoli village, Rajasthan, where her background was that of a farmer. Her startup connects farmers from over five states through mobile pickup stations and an app that facilitates farm-to-market service. After moving past its initial funding difficulties, the firm recently obtained \$2 million in pre-Series A funding with a revenue model comprising 02.00% commission fees charged to traders as well as Rs 50 per transaction charged to farmers achieving Rs 150 crore GMV in FY22. (Matta. A., 2022)

**Bijak:** The Bijak network aims at linking agricultural produce consumers and traders, not just providing an exchange venue but also financing assistance for farm purchases. It helps them thus expanding their scope of work consequently making their deliveries efficient. Instant payments to sellers and loans made available quickly are what Bijak offers which makes it the best option for Indian farmers starting their own businesses.

**DeHaat:** One of India's largest agricultural start-ups, DeHaat offers an application-

based online platform that employs artificial intelligence (AI) to streamline supply chain management and consulting services. It includes soil analysis, yield predictions and expert consultancy. The platform uses state of the art technology to monitor equipment operations, and it additionally provides financial help such as loans and insurance for farmers. The mobile application is available on Android devices (Mandal. 2024).

*"Achieving the Sustainable Development Goals requires a seismic shift – which can only happen if we empower young people and work with them as equals."*

*-UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres.*

## Conclusion

Empowering the youth in agriculture goes a long way in helping to solve various global challenges, including increasing population and environmental pressure. The young can unleash their creativeness by investing in technology that could bring together science and digital innovations in creating better sustainable farming, reducing poverty, and attaining food security. Indeed, it would be easier to obtain leaders who can help answer SDG if the education of the young is given priority. International Youth Day reminds us of the need to support their contribution toward a better, sustainable world.



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