



**“WEST AFRICAN RURAL YOUTH’S VIEWS ON THEIR
PATHWAYS AND FUTURE ON FAMILY FARMING”
RATIONALE, APPROACH, AND OUTCOMES OF A
FARMING RESEARCH
EXCERPTS FROM THE BOOKLET 1**

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THE REASONS WHY ROPPA PRODUCED KNOWLEDGE ABOUT RURAL YOUTH ON FAMILY FARMS

Future of rural youth is a particularly worrying issue in West Africa. An increasingly large and younger population means that this issue will be of growing importance in the years to come. There are significantly more people in the 15 to 19 age group than in previous age groups. In 2017, for example, children under the age of 15 accounted for 49.2% of the population in Niger, 47% in Burkina Faso and 43% in Benin.

However, poor employment opportunities and prospects for these young people will continue to increase: IFAD’s Rural Development Report 2019 («Giving Rural Youth a Chance») shows that employment opportunities for rural youth are particularly low in West Africa and that 9 ECOWAS countries are in the lowest range (low : Benin, Burkina Faso, Guinea, Guinea Bissau, Liberia, Mali, Niger, Sierra Leone and Togo), three in the low-high category (Côte d’Ivoire, Ghana, Nigeria), two in the high-low category (The Gambia, Senegal), and none in the highest range.

Future of rural youth is a constant concern for ROPPA

As early as 2006, ROPPA Convention made recommendations for creation of Youth Colleges, as a space for reflection on their specific concerns and proposals. Since then, at country level, colleges have been set up and many initiatives for the support and installation of young people have been developed.

In 2017, the network started to capitalize on the many initiatives/experiences of youth support at the regional level. This capitalization underpinned the development in 2018 of a regional youth strategy.

The first report of the FF Observatory published by ROPPA in January 2017 called on the various stakeholders and laid the groundwork for this third report.

The questioning of the first report of ROPPA’s Family Farming Observatory (OEF/ROPPA) on the issue of rural youths

«Today, young people are not only growing in number, but their level of education is also advancing and they represent a potential, an opportunity for economic and social development. However, the lack of jobs for young people is a source of problems. The policies defined for youth are not up to the challenge. Also, the concerns for farmers are not only related to the lack of interest of many young rural people in the agro-sylvo-pastoral and fisheries sector, which contributes to accelerating the exodus to cities and reducing the family workforce, but also to the succession after their death.

- These observations and analyses encourage ROPPA to (i) deepen the analysis of the evolution of the situation of young people on family farms, (ii) conduct a critical analysis of youth policies, (iii) acquire the means to better understand the reasons that motivate young people to leave family farms, and (vi) produce a reflection on how to make FFs more attractive, identify successful integrations and capitalize on them»

(summary and conclusions of the first OEF ROPPA report, January 2017 - seventh cross-cutting question: how to act for a better consideration of young people in policies).

Le choix de thématiser le troisième rapport de l’Observatoire des exploitations familiales autour de la question de la jeunesse rurale se situe dans la même lancée.

THE APPROACH THROUGH WHICH ROPPA PRODUCED KNOWLEDGE ABOUT RURAL YOUTH ON FAMILY FARMING

An approach centered on the rural youth/family farm relationship

The Observatory of Family Farms is interested in the relationship between young people and family farming. Its observations focused on this dimension. Very little knowledge has so far been produced on this particular aspect of the problem of youth and family farming.

A dynamic input from pathways

Youth is a stage of life during which a man or woman builds himself or herself. It is marked by great mobility (these young people move in space, change status...) and static categories (age, sex, school level, socio-professional category) freeze its characterization on a moment of its evolution and do not allow to understand its realities. It is therefore necessary to try to understand it in movement. That is what this research sought to do, based on life stories that young people told each other.

Giving Voice to rural youth

We chose to start from the words of young people (435 rural youth from 7 countries, including 190 girls, freely expressed themselves among themselves in focus groups) and to compare

these words with those of adults who run family farms in different sectors and agro-ecological zones.

The interest aroused by this process of giving a voice to rural young people

« Usually, the knowledge produced on the situation of youth is limited and rural youth do not participate sufficiently in the data production processes that affect their lives and the future of the family farms they will inherit». (synthesis CPF, Burkina Faso)

«It’s the first time we’ve been asked for our opinion on what we are and what we want to be» (focus group young people Koulikoro, Mali).

«The methodology used is excellent, and we need to multiply this because there are also other young people who have other suggestions» (youth focus group North Senegal).

... « I thank the people who took this initiative to take an interest in us Talibés. I hope that these surveys will lead to something, not like the previous ones. (youth focus group Segou region, Mali)

Une recherche paysanne construite en 3 étapes sur une durée de 8 mois (août 2019/mars 2020)



Step 1: The pre-thematization workshop that led to the development of 12 «research questions»

In August 2019, farmer leaders and the ROPPA Executive Secretariat team defined 12 questions to be answered through focus group facilitation, and produced a «methodological guide» to train the endogenous facilitators who would conduct the research.

Step 2: Youth focus groups

The research was conducted in 7 countries where national farmers' platforms volunteered to implement it (Burkina Faso, Guinea Bissau, Liberia, Mali, Niger, Senegal, Togo).

In each country, from 3 to 12 «focus groups» of a dozen participants bringing together separately boys, girls and parents were set up to allow exchanges, discussion and collective reflection in relation to the research questions.

These focus groups were moderated by trained endogenous facilitators who conducted in-depth interviews with some participants. The content of these exchanges was exploited by each farmer platform that produced a research report.

Step 3: the regional sharing and enrichment workshop

The regional workshop brought together in February 2020 in Nyéléni (Mali), young people from the 7 countries where the focus groups were held and young people from Benin and Côte d'Ivoire, some farmer leaders and ROPPA partners. Discussions in panels and working groups enriched the research contributions of the 7 National Farmers' Platforms.

This workshop immediately preceded the constitutive assembly of ROPPA's COLLÈGE RÉGIONAL DES JEUNES and was followed by the first meeting to assess the outcomes of the research with some members of ROPPA's Board of Directors (Bamako, March 2020).

Regarding the follow-up to this research, the outcomes suggest, according to ROPPA, to take into account the specificities of pathways and realities of rural youth, to better determine with them «what to act on and who can act?». And with regard to the «How to do it? «ROPPA invites to act together and prioritize the approaches of facilitation and discussion circles.ion.

ROPPA'S KNOWLEDGE ON RURAL YOUTH ON FAMILY FARMS IN THIS 3rd OFF REPORT

ROPPA has capitalized on the knowledge resulting from this farmer research in two complementary booklets :

1. Booklet 1, entitled «West African Rural Youth's Views on their Pathways», August 2020, 51 pages, **illustrated in particular by 51 boxes of accounts from research participants**. This first booklet highlights the diversity of these pathways, and makes the link with the conditions within which the family farm can be perceived by these rural youths as a space for integration. By shedding light on the elements that, at each stage of their lives, help or hinder their integration into the family farm, the knowledge of these diverse and singular paths reminds us that there is not one single rural youth, but several: they are plural because of the diversity of their early childhood conditions, their school careers, their experiences outside their families and villages, and their perceptions of their own future on family farms

2. Booklet 2, entitled « West African Rural Youth's Views on Family Farming », August 2020, 60 pages, **illustrated in particular by 64 boxes of accounts from research participants**. This second booklet starts from the perceptions that rural youth have of their future on or off the family farm, to present the scenarios that they see for themselves according to these perceptions. It then identifies the knots that need to be unraveled and the assets that need to be developed to reconcile these rural youth with the family farm and unleash their potential

This box set is entirely extracted from booklets 1 and 2. It is presented in 1 introductory pocket and 3 thematic sheets which include 21 of the 115 boxes of illustrative accounts that make the particularity and richness of the 2 booklets that we invite you to read. This box set includes :

- a) This introductory pocket which recalls the rationale and the approach of this farmer research on the «views of young rural people on their careers and their future on family farms» ;
- b) A summary sheet on the «diversity of the life courses of rural youth and their perceptions of their own future on family farms» ;
- c) A summary sheet on the «9 scenarios that are emerging for rural youth, depending on whether or not they rely on FFs to build their future»...
- d) A summary sheet on the «factors to be resolved and assets to be developed to reconcile rural youth with family farms and unleash their potential».

This box set presents only a few parts of the answers provided in Booklets 1 and 2 on the issue of rural youth. Among other things, it will facilitate a wide dissemination of the results of this research within FOs so that they can organize farmers' debates on the issues raised, and among the other stakeholders concerned to fuel social dialogue and enable everyone to make commitments in favor of rural youth. But we will probably have to go back to the 2 booklets to have all the knowledge produced by this farmer research.

