



Challenges for agrarian and youth employment



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Access to land, farm transfer and entry opportunities

Overview

Access to land remains one of the main barriers to young people entering farming. High land prices, concentrated ownership, low land mobility, and delayed succession continue to limit entry opportunities for young farmers, including new entrants without the opportunity to inherit and those trying to establish themselves early enough to build a viable business.

Why it matters

When land is inaccessible, agricultural self-employment opportunities shrink, farm transfers are delayed, and generational renewal slows. This reduces the sector's long-term attractiveness and makes it harder for young people to see farming as a realistic life project.

Between 2005 and 2020, the share of EU farm managers aged under 35 fell from **7.3% to 6.5%**.

↓7.3%

6.5%

CORE response

CORE helps identify and showcase good practices that improve access to land and make farm transfer easier, including intergenerational matching, succession support, long-term leasing solutions and mechanisms that improve land transparency.

Through the social dialogues, CORE also explores how public authorities, farmer organisations and local actors can reduce entry barriers and support fairer generational renewal.



Access to finance, investment and innovation

Overview

Young people continue to face difficulties in accessing loans, guarantees and start-up capital, both for entering farming and for investing in digitalisation, modernisation and sustainable production. Existing support is often perceived as too difficult to access, insufficiently visible or not adapted to the real timing of young people's needs.

Why it matters

Without accessible finance, young people cannot invest with confidence, adopt innovation or build resilient farm businesses. The challenge is not only that support is limited, but also that it is often hard to access, poorly matched to real investment cycles, and administratively burdensome. Financial barriers also reduce the uptake of digital tools and sustainability-related investments, even when young people recognise their potential value.

Fi-compass estimated an annual financing gap of around **€62 billion** in EU agriculture, with young farmers representing a substantial share of this gap.

€62
BILLION

CORE response

CORE collects good practices on access to finance for young people in agriculture and rural areas, including tailored loans, guarantee schemes, start-up support, flexible repayment models and clearer communication of funding opportunities.

In social dialogues, CORE helps connect farmers, authorities, and financial actors to discuss how support can become more accessible, timely, and relevant for young people.



Fair income, profitability and economic resilience

Overview

Many young people perceive agriculture and rural employment as economically insecure. The survey also suggests that rural and agrarian livelihoods are often mixed rather than single-source, with off-farm work remaining essential for many respondents. Fluctuating incomes, high input and labour costs, weak bargaining power in the value chain and low returns on sustainable products all reduce the attractiveness of farming as a long-term career.

Why it matters

If young people cannot make a decent and predictable living, they are more likely to postpone entry, depend on off-farm income or leave the sector altogether. Economic insecurity affects not only farm viability, but also confidence, well-being, and long-term commitment to rural life.

More than 4 in 5 respondents did not consider their **household income sufficient**.



CORE response

CORE highlights good practices that improve profitability and resilience, such as diversification strategies, value-added creation, stronger cooperation within value chains, and approaches that enhance price fairness and transparency.

Through the social dialogues, CORE also frames fair income as a central condition for generational renewal and decent rural employment.



Policy, administrative and transition uncertainty

Overview

Young farmers and rural entrepreneurs operate in a context shaped by changing rules, complex procedures, permit delays and fragmented governance. At the same time, they are expected to contribute to environmental and climate transitions whose costs are often felt more immediately than their benefits.

Why it matters

Uncertainty discourages long-term planning, investment and innovation. This is especially difficult when transition-related costs are immediate, while the benefits remain uncertain, delayed or unevenly supported. When policies are difficult to navigate or transitions are perceived as unfairly burdensome, young people may lose trust in institutions and become more hesitant to commit to farming or other rural careers.

Top 3 barriers to adopting sustainable farming practices



1. Lack of financial resources



2. Low price premium for sustainable products



3. Low expected return on investment

CORE response

CORE identifies good practices that reduce uncertainty, such as clearer advisory pathways, more coherent local governance, simpler access to support and better sequencing of transition measures. In the social dialogues, CORE creates space to discuss not only what young people are expected to deliver, but also the conditions needed to make the transition realistic, fair and investable.



Gaps in knowledge, education, advisory support and mentoring

Overview

Agrarian and rural youth need broad and evolving skill sets, including business management, technical, digital and sustainability-related competencies. Yet access to tailored advisory services, mentoring, career guidance and lifelong learning remains uneven, especially where distance, weak local provision or limited connectivity reduce participation

Why it matters

Today's rural and agricultural jobs require much more than technical know-how alone. Respondents also identify lack of financial resources, low expected returns, knowledge gaps and bureaucratic obstacles as key barriers to adopting digital and sustainable innovation. Without the right support architecture, young people face various entry barriers, weaker access to innovation, and fewer opportunities to develop viable, future-proof careers.

Only **32%** of respondents reported using digital agricultural tools, but **87%** of the users cite economic benefits.

87%
32%

CORE response

CORE collects good practices in mentoring, peer exchange, advisory models, practical training, and support for participation in learning activities. Through social dialogues, CORE also helps strengthen cooperation among farmer organisations, advisory bodies, education providers, and local actors so that young people can access support tailored to their realities.



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Limited career pathways and entrepreneurship beyond farming

Overview

For many young rural non-agrarian people, the challenge is not only a lack of jobs but also a lack of diverse and attractive pathways that match their qualifications and aspirations. A resilient rural labour market needs broader opportunities beyond farming, including services, local businesses, care, agro-processing, circular-economy activities, and new forms of entrepreneurship.

Why it matters

When rural economies offer too few meaningful options, young people leave or are forced into insecure, seasonal or informal work. Greater career diversity is essential not only for retaining youth but also for supporting the broader vitality and liveability of rural communities.

82.5% of respondents agreed that extra jobs in rural areas are key to preserving community vitality and liveability.

82.5%

CORE response

CORE showcases good practices that expand rural opportunities, such as entrepreneurship support, local service models, rural innovation initiatives, and stronger links between agriculture and other sectors. In social dialogues, CORE helps define which career pathways are most needed across territories and how policies can better support rural youth as workers, entrepreneurs, and community builders.



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Rural attractiveness, public services, housing and connectivity



Overview

Youth employment cannot be separated from wider living conditions in rural areas. Affordable housing, education, healthcare, transport, childcare and digital connectivity all shape whether young people can remain, return or build a future in rural communities.

Why it matters

When basic services and infrastructure weaken, even motivated young people may feel pushed out. At the same time, national contexts differ, and solutions must be sensitive to local tensions around housing, agriculture and territorial identity. In other words, housing, healthcare, childcare, transport, education and connectivity are not secondary issues: they are employment conditions.



73.2% of respondents agreed that the loss of public services makes younger people leave, and **55%** said the same about the lack of housing.

 **55%**

73.2%

CORE response

CORE identifies good practices that make rural life more workable, including integrated service models, affordable housing approaches, mobility solutions and actions to improve digital connectivity. Through the social dialogues, CORE brings youth voices together with local authorities, service providers and farmer organisations to discuss the concrete conditions needed to make rural areas places where young people can stay and thrive.



Workload, wellbeing, social conditions and recognition



Overview

Seasonal work pressure, long working hours and difficulties in maintaining a healthy work-life balance remain major concerns, especially in agriculture. The report also links these pressures to mental health strain, stigma around help-seeking, social isolation and additional gendered burdens in rural and farming settings. These pressures interact with mental health challenges, social isolation, gendered burdens and a wider feeling among many rural young people that their regions and livelihoods are not sufficiently recognised.

Why it matters

If rural and agricultural work is associated with stress, exhaustion and lack of recognition, it becomes harder to attract and retain young people. Recognition shapes trust in institutions, how policies are received, and whether transitions feel fair and realistic to young people. Wellbeing is not a secondary issue: it is part of what makes rural employment decent, sustainable and socially valued.

65% of respondents said work pressure is seasonal, **57%** felt overworked during peak periods, and **46%** said workload threatens their work-life balance.

655746%

CORE response

CORE collects good practices that reduce pressure and strengthen support, including farm relief services, mental health tools, safer working environments, and initiatives that improve social recognition of rural work. Through social dialogues, CORE helps ensure that well-being, working conditions, and recognition are treated as structural issues rather than individual burdens.



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