

What can youth do?

If you decide that you want to work with youth and why, it is time to start thinking about what youth can do. There are thousands of possibilities; maybe you want their expertise on certain subjects, you might be looking for extra hands in the field, or the youth can get some space to create their own projects (and hopefully jobs). You might want to create a youth council and give young people the opportunity to influence policies and learn how to lobby, or maybe you want them to improve the way of working in the cooperative, develop and train them or have them available to give trainings. Another option could be that you want them to promote agriculture and your cooperative.

You can either think about what you want youngsters to do in your cooperative and/or ask them what they want to put their energy in. After 2 years of workshops we discovered that the activities which the youngsters and their mentors would love to organise can be divided into 4 categories:

Youth in Farming

Let youth mobilise (new) young farmers to become active in the cooperative & work in promotion of agriculture

Mobilise young farmers to join cooperative

- Create moments to meet and interact with young farmers who are not (yet) a member of the cooperative
- Create awareness of importance of farming
- Create awareness of the benefits for youths within a cooperative
- Be a role model, show examples of what other youth have achieved
- Actively involve children of farmers in farming, production and give them responsibility within the cooperative
- Explain why paying membership fees and buying input supplies helps farmers and cooperatives

Change mindset and perception of fellow youth in cooperative

- Create moments to meet and interact with young farmers (sometimes invite experts)
- Mentor new members of cooperative
- Organise farm visits & field days
- Be a role model for other members (increasing production, achieving goals) and show them how you do it
- Keeping up and sharing a positive image and pride of the cooperative

Work on a positive promotion of agriculture

- Teach youth that agriculture is a business
- Mobilisation of youngsters to become farmers

Lobby4Youth

Go and lobby together with young farmers to enhance opportunities in the agricultural sector

Create (job) opportunities

- Lobby and convince stakeholders of other land-use policies in favour of the new generation and to enhance youth's opportunities
- Employment opportunities for youth
- Provide services on behalf of the cooperative
- Create paid advice/training/work at other organisations who want to know more about or want to work with young farmers

Lobby to get your own farm

- Changing the process of farm take-over and inheritance: mutual trust and learning
- Support with farm succession
- Create possibilities within politics and loans for young farmers



Smart Farming

Let youth gain and share knowledge about innovation

Value addition within the current way of working

- Help the cooperative to increase the production and ensure effective collection of the product
- Create innovative and new ideas for cooperative
- Involve members in value addition to get higher profits and benefits for members
- Think about how you can add value to a product to increase income (e.g., not only grow coffee beans, but also roast them and learn barista skills to sell the end product with a mark-up)

Innovation through technology

- Search for new technologies which can improve production with farmers and/or the cooperative
- Train farmers on technical knowledge
- Stimulate young lead farmers initiatives to adopt technology for improving farm practices
- Organise knowledge sharing (not only for youth) in meetings and trainings

Research

- Stimulate research and data collection and use it for the cooperative and individual farmers
- Help to access date market information.
- Active research to improve income for the cooperative and its members and to get to know opportunities in the market

Youth Council

Give youth a place in advising & decision making in the cooperative to create strong cooperatives

Create a youth council and let them

- Share ideas, express views and give advice to the board on several topics which matter for the cooperative
- Participate in decision making (create leadership positions and roles for youth)
- Contribute to the core business of the cooperative (taking into account its mission, vision and BHAG)
- Realise new activities based on needs
- Identify projects that will help the cooperative

Create strong cooperatives, together with the members

- Improve the trust and transparency within the cooperative by explaining and showing the flow of money
- Improve cooperative management
- Invest in communication with the members (not only youth). Show farmers the cooperative benefits
- Improve accountability of and towards the community for production

Improve marketing and communication

- Improve communication and flow of information within the cooperative
- Help cooperative to use modern means of communication
- Improve the marketing of the cooperative

