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Empowering youth in agrifood systems initiatives

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Empowering youth in agrifood systems initiatives

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Ebba Engström^{1,2,*} , Margaret Hegwood³ , Gideon Iheme^{4,5} , Celia Burgaz⁶ , Isnawati Hidayah^{7,8,9}, Ayaz Mukarram Shaikh¹⁰  and Cherie Russell¹¹ 

¹ Centre for Environmental Policy, Imperial College London, 16-18 Prince's Gardens, London SW7 1NE, United Kingdom

² Science and Solutions for a Changing Planet DTP, Grantham Institute, Exhibition Road, South Kensington, London SW7 2AZ, United Kingdom

³ Department of Environmental Studies, University of Colorado Boulder, Boulder, CO, United States of America

⁴ Department of Food Studies, Nutrition and Dietetics, Uppsala University, SE-751 22 Uppsala, Sweden

⁵ Department of Human Nutrition and Dietetics, Michael Okpara University of Agriculture, Umudike, Nigeria

⁶ Department of Epidemiology and Public Health, Sciensano, Rue Juliette Wytsman 14, 1050 Brussels, Belgium

⁷ Department of Economics Development, ROTASI Institute (Institute for Rural Development and Sustainability), 66155 Kab. Blitar, Indonesia

⁸ Department of Economics and Law, Sapienza University of Rome, Rome, Italy

⁹ Department of Public Health and Primary Care, Leiden University Medical Center, Leiden, The Netherlands

¹⁰ Faculty of Agriculture, Food Science, and Environmental Management, Institute of Food Science, University of Debrecen, Böszörményi út 138, 4032 Debrecen, Hungary

¹¹ Deakin University, Geelong, Australia, Institute for Health Transformation, Global Centre for Preventive Health and Nutrition, School of Medicine, Faculty of Health, 1 Epworth Place, 3216 Geelong, VIC, Australia

* Author to whom any correspondence should be addressed.

E-mail: e.engstrom22@imperial.ac.uk

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Abstract

In recent years, youth have been encouraged to become agents of change and help facilitate agrifood systems transformation through several initiatives focused on youth empowerment. However, in this context, there has been limited discussion of how initiatives have supported youth empowerment. In this perspective piece, we, the authors, describe actions for advancing youth empowerment based on our experiences from various youth-oriented agrifood systems initiatives we have been part of. Many of the initiatives we draw on have engaged undergraduate or postgraduate students, and the authors are all pursuing or have pursued postgraduate education—therefore, we recognise that our experiences may differ to youth with other backgrounds and from initiatives with different scopes. We perceive that good practices facilitating youth empowerment have included: (1) creating safe and supportive environments for youth to engage in discussions and develop ideas; (2) the appointment of youth to leadership positions; (3) the involvement of youth in decision-making processes; (4) training and educating youth members; (5) facilitating youth to network, be part of collaborations, and attend high-level meetings; and (6) facilitating youth to be part of socio-political processes and impactful projects. However, despite positive experiences, we had experienced barriers to effective youth empowerment, whereby some initiatives had failed to provide supportive and safe environments, occasionally disregarded youth ideas and efforts, and limited youth engagement to tokenistic participation. Initiatives aiming to empower youth could benefit from: (1) having defined strategies in place for youth involvement and empowerment; (2) clarifying mutual expectations between them and their youth members; (3) openly discussing youth's position in society, developing intergenerational respect, and promoting a community identity among youth; (4) implementing monitoring and evaluation processes to better understand their impacts from youth engagement and on youth empowerment; and (5) fostering teamwork capacities for youth from different backgrounds and geographical locations.

1. Introduction

The current dominant agrifood system is unsustainable and must be transformed to meet environmental, health, and socio-economic goals (Webb *et al* 2020, Schneider *et al* 2023). In 2021, the United Nations Food Systems Summit (UNFSS) was launched, aiming to support this transformation in alignment with the UN Sustainable Development Goals (UNFSS 2021). The UNFSS showcased the need for more constructive engagement involving differing agrifood systems stakeholders (UNEP, FAO and UNDP 2023). One important stakeholder group is *youth*—a broad, intersectional demographic group, defined as being in the transitional life stage moving from childhood to adulthood (UN ECOSOC 2013). For the purpose of this perspective, we define youth as persons who are between the ages of 18–35, drawing on the definition used by the Young Scientist Group (YSG) of the World Food Forum (WFF) (FAO and WFF 2024).

Youth engagement can take many forms in agrifood systems—for example, youth are an integral part of the workforce within the agrifood sector; consumers of agrifood products; and they can hold responsibilities related to feeding other people (e.g. family members) (Glover and Sumberg 2020). To promote youth engagement in agrifood systems transformation, there have been increasing calls and expressions of support for youth empowerment (e.g. Glover and Sumberg 2020, Huyer *et al* 2023, WFF 2023), including by several youth-oriented agrifood systems initiatives (CGIAR 2021, UN Food Systems Coordination Hub 2021, WFF 2024a). Youth empowerment can contribute to young persons becoming involved in decision-making and ‘agents of change’, i.e. individuals driving change (Glover and Sumberg 2020, Huyer *et al* 2023). More generally within agrifood systems, factors which can support empowerment—for example, processes of participatory innovation, have proved to contribute to smallholder farmers closing yield gaps (Zhang *et al* 2016), and women empowerment in agriculture has been associated with positive impacts for dietary diversity and calorie availability at the household level (Sraboni *et al* 2014). However, in agrifood systems, youth empowerment has been studied to a limited extent (Niewoehner-Green *et al* 2025) and the role of youth-oriented initiatives to facilitate it, is poorly understood.

Here, we present our perspectives on how youth-oriented agrifood system initiatives can contribute to youth empowerment by critically examining our experiences of youth initiatives we have been a part of. As a group, we are youth working to promote healthy, sustainable, and equitable agrifood systems, in our roles as academics; members of global youth initiatives, societies, and organisational boards; and founders of advocacy groups, consortia, and research institutes—including in the form of youth-oriented initiatives (Nutrition Drive for Healthy Diet Initiative (2025), Healthy Food Systems Australia (2025), and the ROTASI Institute (2025)). Furthermore, our author group includes individuals who identify as women and men, and who represent a variety of cultural backgrounds—in coming from Sweden (one woman), the United States of America (one woman), Nigeria (one man), Spain (one woman), Indonesia (one woman), India (one man), and Australia (one woman). We are all youth who are pursuing or who have completed graduate level education degrees in agrifood-related disciplines. Specifically, our areas of education and work in agrifood systems include: environmental studies; food systems and policy; food science; nutrition; informatics; dietetics and public health; and economic development.

The youth-oriented initiatives we draw on in this perspective include the YSG of the WFF (2024b), the Youth-Ag Summit (Bayer 2024), the Committee on Sustainable Food Systems of the European Health Parliament (2021), Agriculture Future of America (AFA 2022), Chicago Council on Global Affairs (2025) Next Generation Delegation Programme, the Land O’Lakes (2016) Global Leadership Programme, and Krishi Vigyan Kendra (KVK) (Indian Council of Agricultural Research 2025) (further described in table 1). We have not drawn on the initiatives founded by the authors to reduce partiality in the description of positive and negative experiences. The selected initiatives were deemed relevant in discussing our experiences of youth empowerment in the context of youth-oriented agrifood systems initiatives, due to having the objective of engaging youth as members or in being youth-led. However, we recognise that many of these initiatives have aimed to specifically involve youth pursuing undergraduate or postgraduate degrees—as such, they are not necessarily representative of all forms of youth-oriented agrifood systems initiatives. We would also like to emphasise that all experiences described do not necessarily apply to all initiatives, nor have they been experienced by all authors.

To synthesise our experiences, we developed a youth empowerment framework which combines and draws on the work by Jennings *et al* (2006) and Planas-Lladó and Úcar (2022). The framework was applied and served as a layout for a discussion held between the authors via video call to explore our youth empowerment experiences. The discussion was transcribed and analysed—and through an iterative process between the authors, good practices supporting youth empowerment were identified, together with recommendations for improvement developed, based on the experiences described during the discussion.

Table 1. Youth-oriented agrifood systems initiatives drawn on in the perspective.

Initiative	Description	Active years	Geographical scope	Member or participant backgrounds
Young Scientist Group (YSG) of the World Food Forum (WFF) ^a	The role of the YSG is to provide scientific evidence and technical advice to various branches of the WFF. Members are selected by the management of the WFF.	2022- <i>ongoing</i>	Global	Various cultural backgrounds; youth enrolled in or who have completed Masters-level or PhD-level degrees pertaining to agrifood system areas
Youth-Ag Summit ^b	The Youth-Ag Summit brought together young leaders to network, debate, and develop projects with the purpose of finding solutions which could contribute to increased food security while reducing natural resource use.	2013–2021	Global	Various cultural backgrounds; various educational and professional backgrounds—relevant to agrifood systems
Committee on Sustainable Food Systems of the European Health Parliament ^c	The role of the European Health Parliament was to create a platform that connected and empowered the next generation of European health leaders to rethink European Union health policies and to build a healthier and more innovative Europe.	2014–2022	European Union	Various cultural backgrounds; educational or professional backgrounds within policy or research related to public health
Agriculture Future of America (AFA) ^d	The goal of AFA is to empower young leaders making an impact in food and agriculture. They do this by creating programmes (e.g. summit events) and scholarships that promote professional development, career exploration, and networking. They work extensively to meet talent gaps in these fields by working closely with industry partners.	1997- <i>ongoing</i>	United States of America	Students (but also other young persons who show leadership) with an interest to work in the agriculture, food, and natural resources industries
Chicago Council on Global Affairs' Next Generation Delegation Programme ^e	The Next Generation Delegation Programme brought together young leaders in agriculture at the annual Chicago Council Global Food Security Symposium. Delegates were provided with a special programme during the symposium to build their professional networks and to learn leadership skills.	2016–2019	Global	University students (graduate or advanced undergraduate levels) pursuing degrees within agricultural or international development, entrepreneurship within agrifood contexts, or other disciplines related to food security—and with plans to enter the agrifood sector post-graduation

(Continued.)

Table 1. (Continued.)

Initiative	Description	Active years	Geographical scope	Member or participant backgrounds
Land O'Lakes Global Leadership Programme ^f	In the programme, university students worked closely with professors and Land O'Lakes employees to develop solutions to food insecurity. As part of the programme, students completed a summer internship at Land O'Lakes and were provided with the opportunity to travel to farms across the United States of America; to Land O'Lakes Ventures international development projects across Africa; and to Washington D.C. to meet with Land O'Lakes' representatives to discuss about food security.	2014–2022	United States of America	Undergraduate students from partner universities to Land O'Lakes studying agriculture or related fields
Krishi Vigyan Kendra (KVK) ^g	KVK is a group of agricultural extension centres in India created by the Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR). These centres play a role in transforming Indian agriculture by bridging the gap between research institutions and farmers. Under its structure it aims to involve youth as part of its different regional sub-programmes.	1974-ongoing	India	Students pursuing or who have completed tertiary degrees within various agrifood systems topics

^a (WFF 2024b).

^b (Bayer 2024).

^c (European Health Parliament 2021).

^d (AFA 2022).

^e (Chicago Council on Global Affairs 2025).

^f (Land O'Lakes 2016).

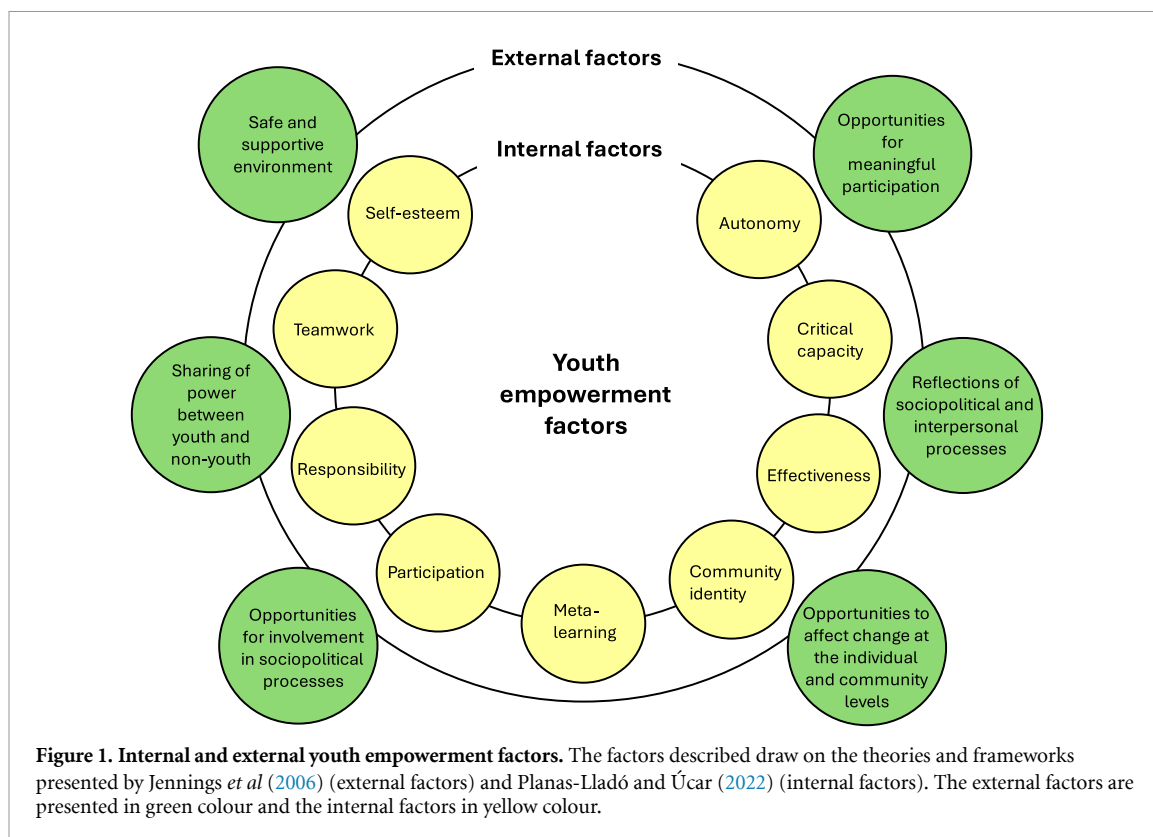
^g (Indian Council of Agricultural Research 2025).

By highlighting both the good practices and offering recommendations for improvement, we aim to inspire and guide youth-oriented initiatives in supporting youth empowerment. In describing our experiences of our respective initiatives, we recognise that these may resonate with those of youth in initiatives associated with other sectors or fields. Thus, the actions we describe which youth-oriented agrifood systems initiatives can take to promote youth empowerment, may be applicable to similar initiatives in other areas. However, we also acknowledge that our experiences of youth empowerment may not be representative of *all* youth who have taken part in youth-oriented agrifood initiatives—including those who hold other educational and professional backgrounds (e.g. youth who have not pursued tertiary education, or youth who are more directly involved with agrifood production and distribution professions).

2. Youth empowerment theory and definition

There is no consensus on what 'empowerment' entails (Úcar Martínez *et al* 2017). Indeed, empowerment is experienced differently across individuals and groups of people (Jennings *et al* 2006). However, most definitions refer to a change which allows a person to gain power and control over their life (Perkins and Zimmerman 1995, Zimmerman 1995, 2000, Úcar Martínez *et al* 2017), and empowerment is often multi-levelled, spanning the individual, organisational, and community levels (Úcar Martínez *et al* 2017).

Most theoretical research related to understanding empowerment has involved non-youth (Russell *et al* 2009, Úcar Martínez *et al* 2017). This has contributed to the difficulties of defining 'youth empowerment', together with the term being used interchangeably (and often improperly) with 'youth activism', 'youth leadership', and 'self-efficacy' (Russell *et al* 2009). However, there are some models and frameworks which



have aimed to explain youth empowerment (Jennings *et al* 2006, Planas-Lladó and Úcar 2022). Here, we have applied two such frameworks which capture factors which contribute to or underly youth empowerment, to guide our perspective. This includes Jennings *et al*'s (2006) critical youth empowerment social theory, which has drawn on prior youth empowerment models. This theory highlights youth empowerment factors in the external environment (hereafter referred to as *external factors*) (see figure 1)—which include the environment which youth find themselves in, the activities they take part in, and opportunities presented to them. Additionally, we draw on the comprehensive set of indicators to assess youth empowerment developed by Planas-Lladó and Úcar (2022), covering individual characteristics and capabilities (referred to as *internal factors*) (figure 1).

3. Experiences of youth empowerment

3.1. Good practices

Our experiences of how youth-oriented initiatives have contributed to our youth empowerment in the context of agrifood systems transformation are mixed and highly initiative-dependent. Within our author group, there were positive experiences in relation to all internal and external empowerment factors—and often these factors were interlinked (e.g. the positive outcome for one factor could lead to a successful outcome for another factor). Based on these experiences, we have identified good practices toward supporting youth empowerment that initiatives have engaged in—and which they should continue to pursue. These include:

1. Creating safe and supportive spaces for open discussions, for youth to develop ideas, and for youth to make mistakes.
2. Appointing youth members to leadership positions.
3. Meaningfully involving youth in decision-making processes and incorporating youths' ideas into the planning and development of projects.
4. Training, educating, and upskilling youth members—including about the policies, regulations, and norms which affect them and associated stakeholders.
5. Facilitating opportunities for youth members to be part of collaborations with other youth and stakeholders, to network, and to attend high-level meetings.
6. Facilitating youth involvement in socio-political processes and opportunities which can have impacts at the individual and community-levels.

Jennings *et al* (2006) describe a safe and supportive environment in the context of youth empowerment as one in which youth feel encouraged, valued, and respected. It is an environment which allows youth to take risks, to share their feelings, and which uplift the achievements of youth. Indeed, here we note the importance of a ‘growth mindset’—allowing youth to fail without giving up. In our experience initiatives had contributed to safe and supportive environments by creating accessible spaces for open discussions and providing room for youth to develop individual ideas. In creating these safe and supportive environments, such efforts may be aided by initiatives investing in opportunities for its youth members to network and connect with each other. From our experiences, this can help contribute to a sense of community among youth members.

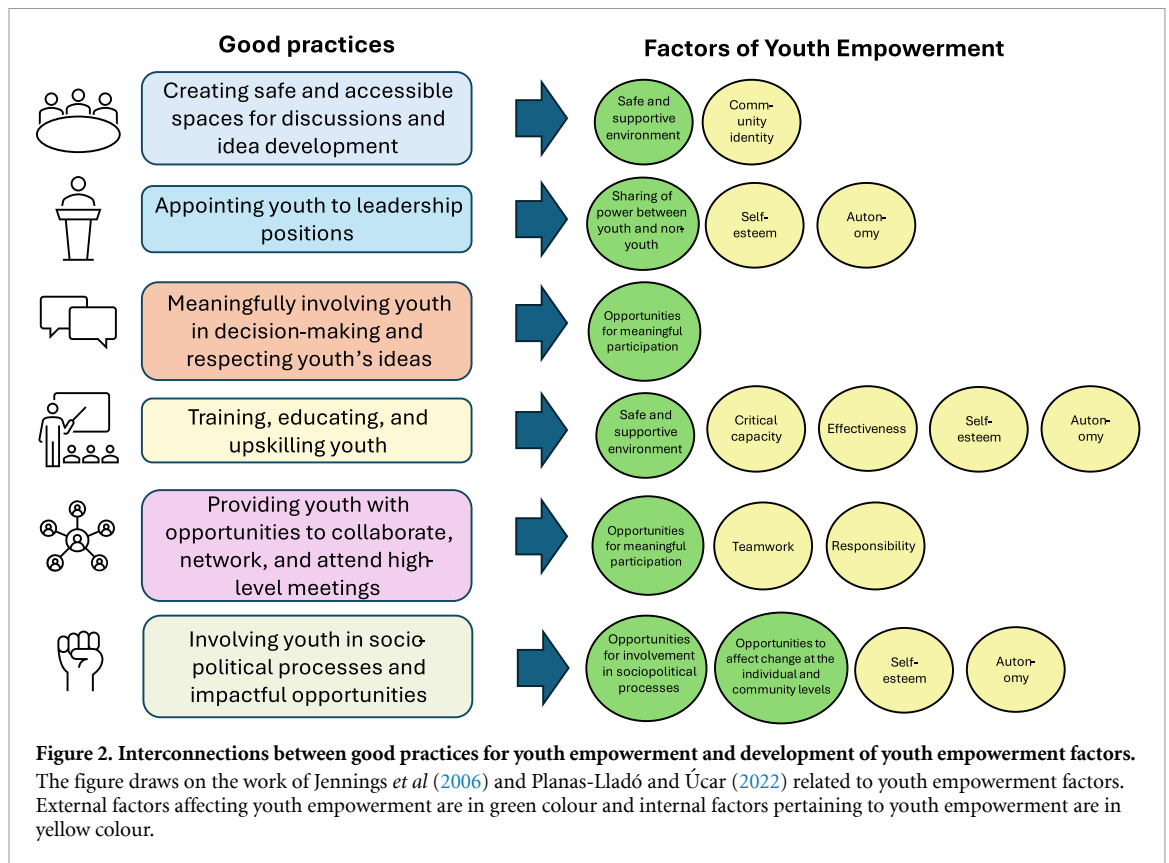
In our initiatives, we had experiences of being appointed to leadership positions ourselves, or from other youth members being appointed. As part of the YSG of the WFF (2024b), members had for example held roles as ‘co-chairs’ within the initiative—and they had been democratically selected to these positions by other YSG members. Additionally, within the European Health Parliament (2021), the leader to the Sustainable Health Systems Committee was selected through a democratic process by the members of the group based on the candidate’s profile and plans to liaise between group members and policy stakeholders. If the leader did not comply with their plan within the first few months of their mandate, a new selection process could be organised. By appointing youth to positions of power, not only did this increase our self-esteem and autonomy (i.e. the ability to take action and act on one’s own convictions (Planas-Lladó and Úcar 2022)), but it also contributed to power sharing—and a more equal power balance—between youth and non-youth members in initiatives.

In this perspective, we refer to ‘meaningful participation’ in decision-making as opposite to ‘tokenistic’ participation (i.e. the thoughts and opinions of the participants may be heard but not necessarily considered by those more powerful, nor can the participants change the *status quo* (Arnstein 1969)). As youth members to our varying initiatives, we had been able to meaningfully take part in decision-making processes and be a part of the development of projects, for example leading and authoring reports—including as part of the YSG of the WFF (2024b). Through this process of meaningful participation, we perceive that we had become more knowledgeable and skilled (e.g. in public speaking) and felt that our ideas had been respected and acknowledged.

In terms of skill development, we had also experienced this through initiative-led training and education efforts directed at youth members; our undertaking of initiative-based projects and research activities; and our engagement in critical peer-review processes. In taking time to train and educate youth members—as, for example, the Committee on Sustainable Food Systems of the European Health Parliament (2021) had done on regulations and policies at the European Union (EU) level, and AFA (2022) through leadership development training—initiatives had contributed to the authors feeling valued and supported. Additionally, such engagements had increased the effectiveness of our work, and developing skills had subsequently boosted our self-esteem and autonomy.

By providing opportunities for youth to collaborate with other youth and stakeholders; to build their networks; and take part in high-level meetings, this had further promoted our abilities to meaningfully engage in decision-making processes related to agrifood systems topics. However, within high-level meeting spaces, for youth to engage meaningfully in decision-making processes, not only do they need the resources and potentially be invited to attend, but additional efforts may be required from the individuals or organisations leading and hosting these events. In the context of UN organisations and their work, UNESCO (2019) have described actions which can be taken to meaningfully engage youth, including ensuring the safety of youth members (both physically and mentally); respecting youth and valuing their capacities; allowing youth to engage in ways most suitable to them; being transparent and providing information about youth’s role in engagements; and investing in environmental and social infrastructure which are youth-friendly. From our initiatives, we had valuable experiences of working with other individuals from different cultural and educational backgrounds. By working in teams as part of our initiatives, this had for some of us, increased our sense of responsibility toward meeting deadlines and our peers.

In our initiatives, efforts made to allow youth to affect socio-political processes included communicating youths’ viewpoints on gender equality (e.g. as part of the YSG of the WFF (2024b) and the Youth-Ag Summit (Bayer 2024)); engaging youth in advocacy campaigns; and providing platforms for youth to engage with local, international, and government officials. For example, as part of the Committee on Sustainable Food Systems of the European Health Parliament (2021), the youth members to the initiative presented a report to the Members of the European Parliament (MEPs) in Brussels, and in a plenary session the youth members were able to discuss the challenges faced by youth in the EU together with the MEPs. In addition, some of our initiatives had allowed us to affect change at the community level by holding and engaging in public education sessions, development-based community projects, and workshops (including as part of the KVK (Indian Council of Agricultural Research 2025) and the Land O’Lakes (2016) Global Leadership



Programme). Seeing these socio-political processes and projects at the community level have impact had increased our self-esteem and motivated some of us to undertake additional projects related to agrifood systems transformation and to drive change.

The good practices enhancing youth empowerment which we have described, and the specific youth empowerment factors they have contributed to in our experience, are summarised in figure 2.

In describing the good practices which youth initiatives have engaged in, we would like to point out that such efforts may have been further fostered by initiatives being youth-led or co-led by youth, as youth interests are represented in such leadership structures. It was also noted how this type of structure can be further supported by for example, appointing youth to leadership positions whilst having non-youth members with substantial experience act as mentors and advisors (e.g. as done within the Nutrition Drive for Healthy Diet Initiative (2025)). Here, we would also like to remark that the role mentors and managers can play in contributing to practices which support youth empowerment should not be underestimated (e.g. Baranik *et al* 2010, Radu 2023).

Engaging in our initiatives had facilitated introspection on our strengths and weaknesses in how we work (pertaining to the internal factor *meta-learning*) and sometimes increased our community identity—both with the communities we had engaged with, but also as youth. Illustratively, one author significantly attributes their identity as youth to the different youth-oriented initiatives they have been a part of. More so, even though no specific good practice toward youth empowerment could be attributed, we perceive that our engagement in our respective initiatives had served as an inspiration for us to continue to pursue furthered careers in the agrifood systems areas. This motivation was contributed to by our broadened interests in the agrifood systems field and the networks we had developed through the initiatives. We had also felt encouraged to be involved in other, similar agrifood systems initiatives, as a result of our knowledge and skill sets being validated through our acceptance into our respective initiatives. A couple of the authors additionally remark how the involvement in their initiatives and the work conducted as part of them, had showcased the role youth can play in agrifood systems.

3.2. Room for improvement

Despite our positive experiences, we see room for improvement among many youth-oriented initiatives in the agrifood context in fostering youth empowerment. Regarding the establishment of safe and supportive environments, negative experiences included poor support structures and disregard for youth members' ideas and efforts. For example, one author indicated that they were rarely asked for their opinion on matters

in one of their initiatives, giving the impression that the initiative was engaging in *youth washing* (i.e. youth being used by organisations and initiatives to showcase commitment to youth engagement but not including them in meaningful discussions or decision-making (Sloan Morgan *et al* 2024)). In some initiatives, it was perceived that professional opportunities were not distributed based on merit or efforts, despite equitable division of opportunities being pivotal in creating supportive environments for youth (Jennings *et al* 2006). For one of the authors, this had resulted in reduced self-esteem. Furthermore, in some initiatives, the production of pre-determined outputs seemed to be occasionally prioritised over the work experiences of the youth.

In some initiatives, there was a lack of opportunities for meaningful participation in events and decision-making processes—with participation instead characterised as tokenistic. This decision-making sometimes extended to the development of the youth initiative itself. One of the authors perceived that their thoughts and opinions about the development of one of their initiatives had not been taken into consideration, despite them being asked for their input on the direction and future plans for the initiative. Additionally, confusion had sometimes been felt about how power was shared in initiatives. For example, in one initiative, youth had been told they had autonomy in their tasks, but then management (predominantly non-youth) often had ultimate say in key decisions. Indeed, equitable power-sharing in youth programmes has been noted as a challenge (Jennings *et al* 2006). Furthermore, when conflicts concerning power sharing had arisen in initiatives, these were not always openly discussed.

Jennings *et al* (2006) describe how another dimension of youth empowerment involves providing youth with sufficient opportunities, room, and support to reflect on their surrounding socio-political environments and structures—including those which they aim to alter (this aspect is referred to in figure 1 as, ‘reflections of sociopolitical and interpersonal processes’). In our initiatives, we had often experienced that critical reflections of our socio-political environments had not been facilitated or encouraged, particularly in relation to our roles and positionality as youth. Indeed, our experiences are not an exception—with Jennings *et al* (2006) having noted how the focus of youth programmes is often activities rather than reflection. However, these reflections are pivotal for youth to understand the challenges and issues facing their demographic (Jennings *et al* 2006). However, some authors had engaged in self-guided reflections regarding our position, and how we are treated, as youth.

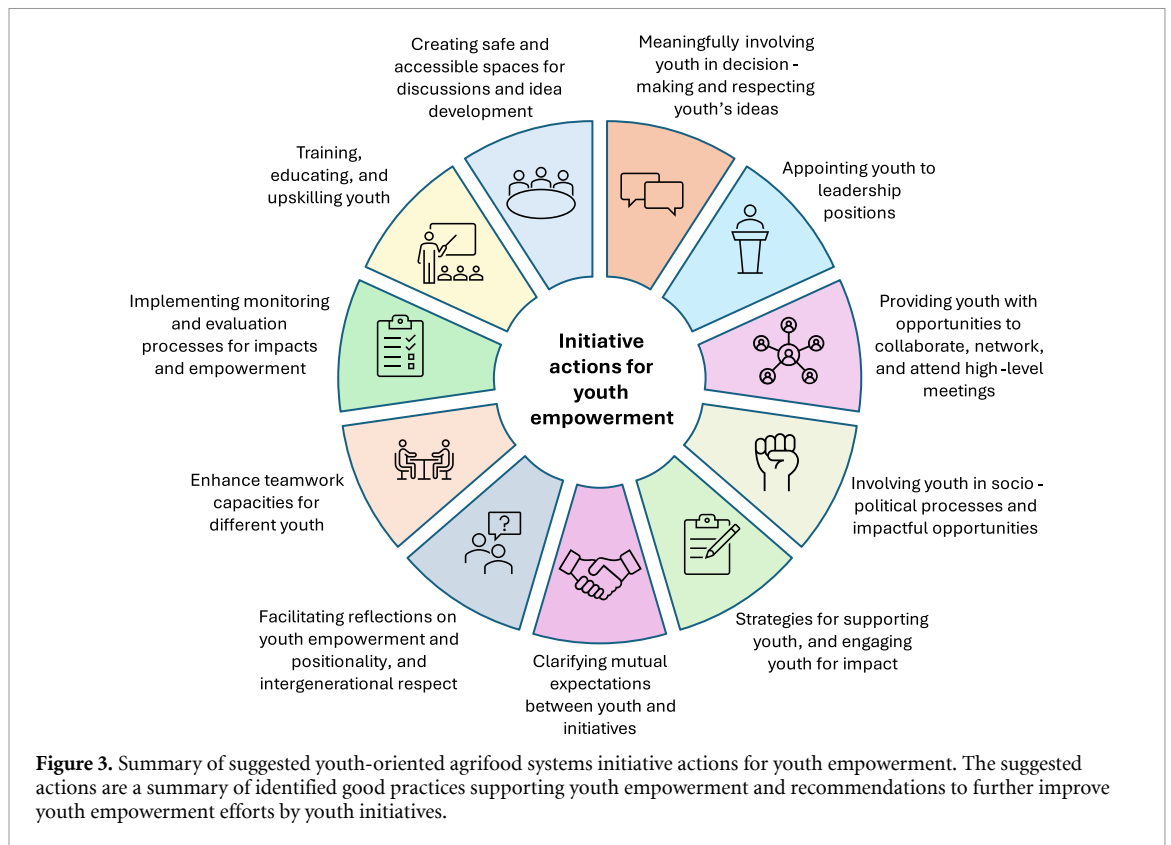
In addition, despite initiatives having facilitated opportunities for some of us to engage in socio-political processes and to affect change at the individual and community levels, we perceive that there was often a lack of processes in place to understand the impacts from these engagements (e.g. using monitoring, evaluation, and learning frameworks (Gadkari 2024)). Moreover, in general, we experienced there to be a lack of monitoring and evaluation processes in place to understand the initiatives’ impacts on youth empowerment.

Certain initiatives had also in our experience not encouraged autonomy, nor actively developed youth members’ teamwork capacities. One of the authors had for example, experienced a low level of effectiveness in one of their initiatives due to working from time zones which were not accommodated for. Consequently, this had made them less accountable toward their peers, which was further amplified by the experience of the initiative not valuing their opinions. Some authors had also felt overburdened by responsibilities within some of their initiatives. These negative experiences of taking on responsibilities also became more pertinent when the authors perceived that their efforts were not being sufficiently acknowledged. In addition, we feel that youth-oriented initiatives can overburden youth members to produce solutions to agrifood systems problems that were caused, at least in part, by previous generations. Furthermore, initiatives had sometimes counteracted the development of a youth identity amongst their members, by keeping different youth groups working in silos.

4. Recommendations and conclusion

Based on our experiences, we recommend the following steps to further improve youth empowerment efforts in youth-oriented agrifood system initiatives:

1. Initiatives should have strategies in place to ensure all youth members are supported and encouraged, and which describe how youth will be involved in engagements (as also requested by Choonara (2021) for youth structures after their experiences of the Youth Advisory Council to the African Union). Additionally, strategies should be in place to ensure tangible impact from youth participation in the initiatives. This may entail a focus on involving youth in smaller and more regional initiatives, as it has been described that youth can sometimes have more power in more local, regional initiatives than at higher levels (Jennings *et al* 2006). Furthermore, where applicable, initiatives should allocate adequate resources for its youth to engage in research and practice activities.



- Mutual expectations should be clarified between youth and their initiatives, ensuring that these are not one-sided. This includes initiatives transparently communicating what youth members can expect in taking on different responsibilities, and how opportunities are distributed among members. In discussing these topics, youth should be able to provide inputs on how to make these processes more equitable. Furthermore, initiatives should encourage youth to produce solutions and outputs but be realistic regarding their scope in relation to youth members' capacities and resources available within the initiatives.
- Initiatives should aim to facilitate reflections surrounding what youth empowerment entails, how to ensure intergenerational respect between youth and non-youth members, together with the socio-political and interpersonal processes which affect youth and initiatives' associated stakeholders. Additionally, efforts should be made by initiatives to foster community identity among youth.
- Youth initiatives should aim to have monitoring and evaluation processes in place to understand the impacts from set strategies and their contributions to youth empowerment. This could include feedback processes capturing youth experiences, whereby youth should be made aware of how their feedback feeds into the initiatives. Without these monitoring and evaluation processes, we may not be able to understand if and how youth-oriented initiatives are supporting youth empowerment.
- If youth members are intended to collaborate on various projects as part of initiatives, the initiatives should aim to increase teamwork capacities and accommodate youth engaging from different parts of the world, with different language skills and infrastructural realities. This includes accounting for youth members working from different time zones, not working in their native languages, and not always being based in areas with sufficient connectivity.

The good practices for youth empowerment and the given recommendations to further support youth empowerment discussed in this perspective present actions which can be taken by youth-oriented agrifood systems initiatives to empower youth, and are summarised in figure 3. Some of these actions may also be relevant to promote empowerment among various demographic groups, as well as more inclusive engagement of people in initiatives and events in general.

Furthermore, in applying our framework encompassing external and internal factors which shape youth empowerment, we present a mechanism for better understanding youth empowerment. This framework can be further adapted to explore youth empowerment among youth with different backgrounds and initiatives which aim to engage differing youth demographics. Through describing good and recommended practices to support youth empowerment we recognise the value in further investigating how each of these actions are

interconnected—including how they build on and compare to each other—and how this relates to their potential impact. It would also be of interest to study in-depth how different youth-oriented initiatives have implemented the suggested actions, and the barriers and enablers they have faced in doing so. Such additional exploration could support the design of practical policies and strategies to effectively achieve youth empowerment by identifying actions which may be the most positively impactful; the actions which may serve as a stepping stone for additional actions; and the considerations which must be made for actionable implementation.

Data availability statement

No data were created or analysed in this study.

Conflict of interest

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported on in this article.

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Author contributions

Using CRediT:

Conceptualisation—Engström, E; Hegwood, M, Russell, C

Formal analysis—Engström, E

Investigation—Burgaz, C, Engström, E, Hegwood, M, Hidayah, I, Iheme, G, Russell, C, Shaikh, A M

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Supervision—Russell, C

Visualisation—Engström, E; Hidayah, I

Writing—original draft—Engström, E; Hegwood, M, Russell, C

Writing—review and editing—Burgaz, C, Engström, E, Hegwood, M, Hidayah, I, Iheme, G, Russell, C, Shaikh, A M

ORCID iDs

Ebba Engström  0000-0002-6760-2108

Margaret Hegwood  0000-0003-4848-1563

Gideon Iheme  0000-0003-1554-5970

Celia Burgaz  0000-0002-4806-6055

Ayaz Mukarram Shaikh  0000-0002-0410-5286

Cherie Russell  0000-0003-1251-4810

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