

CALL FOR EXTERNAL RESEARCHER / EXPERT

Evidence Synthesis on Youth Employment in Just Food Systems Transitions in Africa

Background

Food systems across Africa are undergoing profound transformations, driven by climate change, environmental degradation, demographic pressures, technological change, and shifting global and regional markets. These dynamics are reshaping how food is produced, processed, distributed, and consumed with significant implications for employment, livelihoods, and equity.

Young people are at the centre of these transformations. They are disproportionately affected by unemployment, underemployment, and poor job quality, while also holding critical potential as workers, entrepreneurs, innovators, and agents of change within food systems. However, transitions towards greener and more sustainable food systems are not inherently just. Without deliberate policy choices, they risk reproducing or deepening existing inequalities, excluding certain groups of youth, or creating new forms of precarity.

Against this backdrop, INCLUDE launched the research programme [Youth in Just Food Systems Transitions](#). The programme examines how food systems transitions shape youth employment outcomes, and under what conditions these transitions can contribute to decent, inclusive, and equitable livelihoods for young women and men. It explicitly applies a political economy lens and treats justice as both an outcome and a process, emphasising issues of power, voice, agency, and distribution for a just food systems transition. Recognising the multidimensional nature of justice in food system transitions, the case study research is supported by the analytical framework presented in the [foundational paper](#).

As part of this programme, five country case studies are being conducted and will be finalised by April 2026. These studies explore youth employment dynamics in different food system contexts, focusing on green jobs creation, institutional and regulatory frameworks, justice dimensions, digitalisation, and gender equality in Benin, Ghana, Rwanda, Somalia and South Africa.

Purpose of the Evidence Synthesis

INCLUDE hereby invites proposals from qualified external researchers or research teams to conduct an Evidence Synthesis Paper (ESP) that brings together and synthesises insights from the five country case study reports. The purpose of the evidence synthesis is not to replicate or summarise the individual case studies, but to:

- Identify cross-cutting patterns, tensions, and trade-offs across contexts;
- Analyse how different transition pathways shape youth employment outcomes in African food systems;
- Surface political economy dynamics that enable or constrain just transitions;
- Translate empirical findings into actionable insights for policy and practice.

The ESP is intended to support evidence-informed decision-making by policymakers, funders, practitioners, and businesses engaged in food systems transformation and youth employment.

Scope and Guiding Questions

The evidence synthesis should be grounded in the five case study reports and guided by the overarching focus on youth employment in just food systems transitions analysed through the four justice dimensions: distributive, procedural, recognition, and restorative (see [Foundational Paper](#)). The synthesis is expected to engage with, but not be limited to, the following questions:

- How do food systems transitions reshape employment opportunities and risks for young women and men across different contexts?
- What types of green jobs are emerging, transforming, or disappearing within agrifood value chains, and who is able to access them?
- How do institutional, regulatory, and market frameworks influence youth employment outcomes in food systems transitions?
- What political economy dynamics (power relations, incentives,) shape transition pathways and their justice implications?
- How do gender, socio-economic background, geography (rural–urban), and other axes of inequality affect youth's experiences of food systems transitions?
- What role do digital and green technologies play as enablers or barriers to decent and inclusive youth employment?
- Under what conditions can food systems transitions contribute to justice understood both as an outcome (fair distribution of benefits and burdens) and as a process (voice, agency, and participation)?

The synthesis should strike a balance between analytical depth and accessibility, producing insights that are relevant across contexts while remaining grounded in case-based evidence.

Expected Outputs

The selected researcher(s) will be expected to deliver:

- **One Evidence Synthesis Paper** (approximately 20-30 pages), integrating findings from the five case studies;
- A concise **policy-oriented summary** (2–3 pages) highlighting key messages, implications, and recommendations for policy and practice;
- **Active engagement** with the INCLUDE team during the synthesis process, including feedback rounds and participation in an online webinar to disseminate the findings.

All outputs will be published under a Creative Commons Attribution-International (CC BY 4.0) licence.

Required Format of the Proposal

Proposals should demonstrate a clear understanding of the programme's framing and the role of evidence synthesis. Submissions should include:

- Name(s) and affiliation(s) of the applicant(s);
- An abstract (max. 250 words);
- A detailed description of the proposed synthesis approach, including how the case studies will be analysed and integrated;
- A preliminary outline of the proposed paper, with a short explanation of each section;
- A short note with reference to relevant literature on your understanding of the programme's focus (justice, political economy, and food systems transformation);
- A reflection on the policy relevance and intended audiences of the synthesis;
- Relevant experience with evidence synthesis, political economy analysis, and/or food systems and youth employment research;
- Annexes:
 - Detailed budget breakdown (maximum EUR 15,000, inclusive of VAT and editing costs);
 - Short CV(s) (max. two pages per author) and list of key publications or relevant outputs;
 - A statement confirming compliance with the EU General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR).

Selection Criteria

Proposals will be assessed based on:

- Relevance to the objectives and framing of the research programme;
- Analytical quality and clarity of the proposed synthesis approach;
- Ability to engage with justice, political economy, and food systems perspectives;
- Policy and practice relevance of the proposed outputs;
- Qualifications and demonstrated experience of the applicant(s).

Timeline

Indicative timeline (subject to minor adjustments):

- Deadline for submission of proposals: **6 March**
- Notification of selected applicant(s): **approx. 2 weeks after deadline**
- Start of the assignment/ submission of final case study reports: **1st April 2026**
- Delivery of draft Evidence Synthesis Paper: **1st week of June 2026**
- Feedback from INCLUDE and partners: **within 2 weeks**
- Submission of final Evidence Synthesis Paper: **1st week of July 2026**

Submission and Contact

Proposals should be submitted in English by email to:

Joscha Betke

Knowledge Manager, INCLUDE

Email: joscha@includeplatform.net

By submitting a proposal under this call, applicants consent to the use and disclosure of submitted materials for review and selection purposes within INCLUDE and with external reviewers.