

INSIGHT 08

YOUTH VOICES DRIVE THE FUTURE AND NEED TO BE CONSULTED.

This insight was most frequently discussed in the youth/elder and rural identity conversations. However, youth were described as driving the future across other identity conversations.

Participants from BIPOC, rural, youth/elder groups acknowledged the difficulties of persuading young people to “return to the land” and view agriculture as a viable business. All three identity conversations **stressed** the importance of integrating food and agriculture into early education so that youth can maintain a lifelong interest in the work.

Differences in the working styles and ideals of elders and youth are one obstacle to keeping youth in agricultural work. In the youth/elder group, participants discussed the challenges of working across generations while still acknowledging the value of intergenerational collaboration. In contrast to older generations, youth were more likely to value creativity, innovation, and flexibility. Elders preferred traditional values and conventional working styles. Even though youth and elders have different priorities, both groups expressed value in farming.

Youth were described as the voice of the future by many identity conversation participants. In addition, this identity valued racial equity and social justice principles as part of its work. Elders and adults need to give youth the platform to be involved and use their voices within the food system.

Youth have a new perspective on the system compared to those that have worked in food and agriculture for years. For example, youth ideals were most aligned with the insight that capitalism should be taken out of the food system. Working across generations presents a unique opportunity. Youth have the **energy** and **passion** to innovate while elders have wisdom, experience, and knowledge.

“It can be a great idea to collaborate with the positive and creative thinking of youth when trying to tackle age-old issues.”

- YOUTH/ELDER

“There’s a belief that younger generations aren’t as hard working as older generations. I think that’s a complete misunderstanding about how younger people work and where we allocate our time. I think younger people choose to pursue things they care about. Rather than trying to shift younger people to get them to conform to the traditional way of work, embrace the change, and embrace a different culture of work.”

- YOUTH/ELDER



Calls to Action:

- Support youth involvement in all aspects of the food system.
- Food should be incorporated into the education systems to promote interest in agriculture careers early on.
- Intergenerational collaboration is necessary for youth to be fully supported within the system.
- Although there are generational differences between elders and youth, the hindsight and foresight perspectives of both identities are necessary to craft the future of the food system.
- Identity conversation participants emphasized the need for youth to receive agricultural education from grade school through early adulthood.