

## **Demographic dividend and food systems transformation in Africa**

### **Extended Abstract**

Africa is at a crucial crossroads, with its demographic dividend poised to serve as a catalyst for transformative growth in its food systems. The demographic dividend, the potential for economic growth arising from changes in a population's age structure, notably when the share of the working-age population increases relative to dependents, presents a unique opportunity for revitalizing and innovating Africa's food systems. This paper explores how Africa's burgeoning young workforce can be leveraged to enhance productivity, innovation, and sustainability within the continent's food systems. By reviewing demographic trends, agricultural policies, and case studies across countries, we identify key strategies for capitalizing on the demographic dividend. The synthesis of literature reveals that targeted interventions and investments can significantly contribute to transforming Africa's food systems into more productive, inclusive, and resilient entities.

Bloom, Kuhn, and Prettner (2016) highlight Africa's prospects for enjoying a demographic dividend, emphasizing the need for coordinated policies in macroeconomic management, human capital, trade, governance, and labor and capital markets to harness this potential effectively. Jayne, Chamberlin, and Headey (2014) discuss the impact of rising rural population densities on farming systems and the economy, stressing the importance of anticipating the challenges posed by mounting land pressures and the need for sustainable agricultural intensification. To fully harness the benefits of demographic dividend, one needs to account for the critical role of supportive policies, including those fostering human capital accumulation and job creation, to translate this opportunity into concrete economic growth (Drummond, Thakoor, & Yu, 2014). Lutz et al. (2019) argue that education rather than age structure brings a demographic dividend, emphasizing the dominance of improving education over changes in age structure for economic growth and sustainable development (Lutz et al., 2019). Policies needed to capture a demographic dividend in Africa, are those with the potential to improve the demographic, employment, and socioeconomic dependency ratios for achieving sustainable shifts in food systems (Groth, May, & Turbat, 2019).

The ongoing demographic dividend in Africa holds the potential for significant contributions to the systemic transformation of the continent's food systems. With the right mix of policies and investments focused on education, innovation, and sustainability, Africa can leverage its young population to achieve a more productive, inclusive, and resilient food system.