



**Food and Agriculture Organization
of the United Nations**

**2nd International Symposium on Agroecology: Scaling up agroecology to achieve the
Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)
3 - 5 April 2018, Rome**

Chair's Summary

This document represents an attempt by the Chair to capture the richness of the contributions presented during the Symposium by different stakeholders and experts, to be more fully registered in the full report of the Symposium to be prepared by FAO, and does not necessarily reflect the opinions and views of each individual participant or of each of the Member States which participated in the Symposium.

The 2nd International Symposium on Agroecology, held at FAO's headquarters, bringing together more than 700 participants with representatives from 72 governments, about 350 non-state actors' organisations, and representatives of 6 UN organisations, analysed experiences, evidence and public policies to respond to the challenges facing food and agriculture systems. Building on the 1st International Symposium on Agroecology for Food Security and Nutrition, held in Rome in September 2014, and the seven regional multi-stakeholder seminars on agroecology, organised by FAO between June 2015 and November 2017¹, participants explored solutions, experiences and practices coming mostly from the grassroots, articulated in a transformative vision of agriculture to be resilient, equitable and socially just, based on agroecology. The 2nd International Symposium provides support to the notion that we have reached a turning point: it is time to scale up agroecology now.

The focus on increasing yields promoted by the Green Revolution is viewed by many as not sustainable and not sufficient to eradicate hunger and poverty, or to face the challenges of natural resources exhaustion, environmental degradation and biodiversity loss, and the need to adapt to climate change. It is broadly recognised that in order to achieve the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, there is an urgent need to promote transformative change in how food is grown, produced, processed, transported, distributed and consumed. Agroecology is seen by many to offer multiple benefits, including for increasing food security and resilience, boosting livelihoods and local economies, diversifying food production and diets, promoting health and nutrition, safeguarding natural resources, biodiversity and ecosystem functions, improving soil fertility and soil health, adapting to and mitigating climate change, contributing to women's empowerment, and preserving local cultures and traditional knowledge systems, often in synergy with organic agriculture.

It is broadly recognised as critical that legal and regulatory frameworks are implemented in a way that ensures transformative change towards sustainable agriculture and food systems based as far as possible on agroecology, and respects, protects and fulfils farmers' rights and promotes access to productive resources such as land, water and seeds. It is especially broadly recognised that it is critical to ensure the active participation of family farmers², in particular small-scale food producers, women and youth, as

¹ Catalysing dialogue and cooperation to scale up agroecology: outcomes of the FAO regional seminars on agroecology. Available at: <http://www.fao.org/3/I8992EN/i8992en.pdf>

² Family farmers are considered in a range from smallholder to medium-scale farmers, and include peasants, indigenous peoples, traditional communities, fisher folks, mountain farmers, pastoralists and many other groups representing every region and biome of the world. They run diversified agricultural systems and preserve traditional food products, contributing both to a balanced diet and the safeguarding of the world's agro-biodiversity (FAO Family Farming Knowledge Platform, 2018; available at: <http://www.fao.org/family-farming/en/>).

historical subjects of agroecology, in dialogue spaces of public policies, and to develop policies that promote the spread of organic farming. This will not only facilitate the spread of agroecology but will provide the drive for policy and institutional changes and investments that are supportive of using agroecology to transform food and agricultural systems toward sustainability. Sustainability can only be achieved with the inclusion of all actors in food and farming systems in all continents, from small-scale farmers and their families to the networks of conscientious consumers. Fostering diversity on farms, strengthening local food systems, valuing traditional knowledge, ensuring equity and access to land and economic resources, and respecting the multiple food cultures around the world are understood as core components of agroecology.

Agroecology scaling up is recognized and proposed by many as a way forward in the coming decade as a strategic approach and means to promote and achieve the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and, in particular, Sustainable Development Goal 2 on hunger eradication, food security and sustainable agriculture. In fact, agroecology is recognised as contributing to numerous other Sustainable Development Goals, and as providing one of the most integrated, comprehensive and holistic approaches that will directly benefit those whom the 2030 Agenda aims to uplift. In order to achieve many SDGs, the diverse agriculture systems of the world have to initiate their transition towards sustainable agriculture and food systems, with different starting points and diverse pathways based, as much as possible, on agroecology principles.

The ministers of agriculture/environment of the following countries presented their perspectives and activities related to agroecology: Angola, Burkina Faso, Costa Rica, France, and Hungary. The Permanent Representatives of China and Iran, and the Archbishop of the Holy See also spoke. Issues raised included: need to scale up agroecology to reach the SDGs; agriculture must fundamentally change to do so; many countries already have relevant policies, laws, targets and concrete achievements; the need for developing legal frameworks and strengthening technical and institutional capacities for agroecology; agroecology is necessary for food sovereignty and decreasing dependence on food imports; climate change, desertification and water scarcity are key challenges in many countries; biodiversity is an essential part of agroecology; farmers must be able to live with dignity from their work; avoid silos and cooperate on innovative integrated approaches; international dialogue is necessary to move forward; be involved in true cost accounting; policies are needed but also social mobilisation; need to focus on agroecology as a part of the UN Decade for Family Farming; welcome collaboration between the Rome-Based Agencies on agroecology.

Over the last four years, FAO has convened very fruitful multi-stakeholder dialogues, and its commitment to continue to support this dynamic at global and regional levels is broadly welcomed. Building on the outcomes of these processes and on the draft proposal for a Scaling Up Agroecology Initiative³, participants have identified a range of options on how stakeholders can contribute, in multiple ways, to strengthening existing agroecological systems already developed by farmers as well as to promote the transition to sustainable agriculture and food systems through the use of agroecology principles and practices. The key actions contained in Annex 1 of this document are options for consideration.

³ Scaling Up Agroecology Initiative: Transforming food and agricultural systems in support of the SDGs (A proposal prepared for the International Symposium on Agroecology, 3-5 April 2018), available at: <http://www.fao.org/3/I9049EN/i9049en.pdf>

Way forward

Agroecology is seen by many as a great opportunity to support the transformation that is needed in our food systems and different kinds of commitments from different stakeholders are identified by participants as urgently needed. Based on the outcomes of the regional processes, the 2nd International Symposium on Agroecology and the work areas of the proposed Scaling Up Agroecology Initiative, FAO's continued commitment to agroecology has been highlighted, including the broad recognition of the need to foster its growth and support countries and different stakeholders in this process while respecting the principles and local experiences of agroecology. A variety of ways for stakeholders to engage in this process over the next decade have been identified by many participants, including:

- **Governments:** develop policy and legal frameworks to promote and support agroecology and sustainable food systems, including by putting in place policies that support agroecology and family farmers, in particular smallholder producers, women and youth.
- **FAO:** submit to FAO Committee on Agriculture in 2018 a document on options for mainstreaming agroecology based on potential elements contained in this Chair's Summary and the Final Report of the Symposium, including the consideration of a detailed 10-year action plan for the Scaling Up Agroecology Initiative.
- **FAO:** pursue its mandate to reinforce the work on agroecology through its different programmes and strategic framework, including GIAHS (Globally Important Agricultural Heritage Systems) and work with small-scale producers' organisations and governments to support implementation of agroecology at local, national, and international level, including through promoting dialogue and sharing data.
- **FAO:** take the lead, in partnership with other international organizations, academia and research organizations, to facilitate the development of new methodologies and indicators to measure sustainability performance of agricultural and food systems beyond yield at landscape or farm level, based on the 10 Elements of Agroecology⁴ and experience in developing indicator 2.4.1 to measure the sustainability of agriculture systems at the country level in the overall framework of measuring progress towards Agenda 2030.
- **UN partners of the Scaling Up Agroecology Initiative, including FAO, IFAD, WFP, CBD, UNEP and UNDP:** work in a coordinated way to scale up agroecology through policies, science, investment, technical support and awareness, according to their mandate and expertise, and extending the knowledge to all actors in societies.
- **FAO and IFAD:** use the Decade of Family Farming 2019-2028 as an opportunity to raise awareness in the international community about the importance of family farming and to link family farming and agroecology for achieving sustainable development.
- **FAO and WHO:** use the United Nations Decade of Action on Nutrition 2016-2025 as an opportunity to raise awareness in the international community about the importance of family farming and agroecology for achieving health and nutrition for all.
- **Small and medium enterprises and investors, including from the private sector:** explore the potential of agroecology, and different and innovative ways to invest in it, to increase responsible

⁴ The 10 Elements of Agroecology: Guiding the Transition to Sustainable Food and Agricultural Systems, available at: <http://www.fao.org/3/I9037EN/i9037en.pdf>. The 10 Elements of Agroecology were developed through a synthesis process. They are based on the seminal scientific literature on agroecology – in particular, Altieri's (1995) five principles of agroecology and Gliessman's (2015) five levels of agroecological transitions. This scientific foundation was complemented by discussions held in workshop settings during FAO's multi-actor regional meetings on agroecology from 2015 to 2017, which incorporated civil society values on agroecology, and subsequently, several rounds of revision by international and FAO experts.

Altieri, M.A. 1995. *Agroecology: The Science of Sustainable Agriculture*. CRC Press.

Gliessman, S.R. 2015. *Agroecology: The Ecology of Sustainable Food Systems*. 3rd Edition. Boca Raton, FL, USA, CRC Press, Taylor & Francis Group.

investment in agroecology in accordance with agroecological principles and relevant international frameworks⁵.

- **Foundations and funders:** view agroecology as an opportunity to transform the food system and address challenges by increasing long-term funding to agroecology including environmental, economic and social components, including the co-creation of knowledge, and to multiple stakeholders, in particular small-scale producers' organisations, NGOs and governments. Engage with networks of funders and foundations to increase sustainable funding for agroecology.
- **Family farmers and small-scale producers:** continue feeding their communities and the cities of the world, sharing their knowledge and experiences and using their networks and farmer-to-farmer processes to scale up agroecology, including agroecology schools, providing multiple benefits to society and promote participative co-innovation building upon traditional knowledge and practices.
- **Civil society organisations:** maintain support for agroecology movements by producing knowledge and awareness and advocating for the enhancement of agroecological systems worldwide. The Declaration of small-scale food producers' organizations and civil society organizations at this Symposium will be an integral part of the final report of the Symposium.
- **Academia and research organisations:** increase training and research on agroecology, including pushing the boundaries of science, to increase and consolidate the evidence base on the impacts of agroecology, involving farmers in this process, respecting and promoting traditional knowledge and their knowledge systems. Develop new methodologies and indicators for sustainable food systems that are not solely based on yield including online collaborative platforms to connect relevant actors and enable the co-creation of knowledge. Extend the research agenda to the cost effective and massive transfer of knowledge to millions of farmers on agroecology and support networking among innovative agroecological farms that involve collaboration between farmers and researchers.
- **Consumers and citizens:** act as agents of change in the food system to promote responsible consumption, and increase innovative alliances between producers and consumers. Request the private sector and governments to support and invest more in agroecology.
- **Committee of World Food Security and its High Level Panel of Experts on Food Security and Nutrition:** consider the actions identified in this Chair's Summary in the report of the High Level Panel of Experts on Food Security and Nutrition on agroecological approaches and other innovations for sustainable agriculture and food systems that enhance food security and nutrition, and the policy roundtable that it will inform in 2019.

⁵ Including the Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land, Fisheries and Forests in the Context of National Food Security, the Principles for *Responsible Investment* in Agriculture and Food Systems, and Free Prior and Informed Consent (recognised under the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples).

Annex 1: Key actions for scaling up agroecology

1. Strengthen the central role of family farmers and their organisations in safeguarding, utilising and accessing natural resources

- a. Upholding the human rights of family farmers, agricultural workers, indigenous peoples, and consumers, in particular women and youth
- b. Scaling up agroecology by supporting the sharing of experiences, knowledge and collective action among the family farmers currently engaged with agroecology
- c. Respecting, protecting and fulfilling family farmers' rights and access to common goods and natural resources such as land, water, forests, fisheries and genetic resources, including through the operationalisation of the Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land, Fisheries and Forests in the Context of National Food Security, and the development of regulatory frameworks that implement the Farmers' Rights (including Article 9 of the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture)
- d. Recognising, preserving and utilising traditional and indigenous knowledge, culture and heritage, including traditional foods
- e. Promoting the dynamic management of biodiversity and use of local and traditional crops and livestock breeds
- f. Supporting product diversification and integration of cropping, livestock, aquaculture, and forestry

2. Foster experience and knowledge sharing, collaborative research and innovations

- a. Developing family farmer-led and participatory research and co-innovation that is people-centred, builds collective capacities to solve systemic problems, is climate resilient, low-cost, enhances family farmers' autonomy and livelihoods, is locally adapted, uses natural resources sustainably and evolves according to feedback
- b. Developing interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary research and filling research gaps and promoting technical, social and institutional innovations for agroecology
- c. Creating networks for family farmers' to share their innovations and multi-stakeholder cooperation platforms for collaboration between farmers and researchers at local, national, regional and global levels
- d. Investing in smallholder family farmer-led training and knowledge sharing, such as the peasant agroecology schools and including agroecology in training and educational curricula from primary schools to universities
- e. Documenting the social, economic, health, nutrition, resilience and social justice benefits of agroecology, including qualitative and quantitative data
- f. Developing analytical frameworks for developing policies and the instruments to implement them

3. Promote markets for agroecological based products for health, nutrition and sustainability

- a. Supporting value addition to agroecological products, shorter food supply chains and innovative markets, such as public procurement schemes and direct linkages between consumers and family farmers
- b. Harnessing consumers' existing demand for healthy and fair products to strengthen agroecology and further raising awareness of the benefits of agroecological products, including nutritional quality, health and the importance of diversified production systems for diversified diets, and the need to change consumption patterns that are fed by resource-intensive production systems

- c. Promoting small-scale social enterprises for agroecology and developing regulatory frameworks that facilitate the sales of products (particularly for processed and animal based products) from agroecological smallholder agriculture
- d. Promoting markets and economies based on solidarity and ensuring that food from agroecology is affordable for the urban and rural poor
- e. Promoting territorial approaches and the transition to circular food systems, linking where appropriate with the GIAHS initiative hosted by FAO
- f. Reforming policies and incentive measures to enhance local food systems and strengthen local markets for agroecological family farmers
- g. Conducting baseline studies on production and market potential that help make the case for agroecology and monitor its growth
- h. Promoting organic farming

4. Review institutional, policy, legal and financial frameworks to promote agroecological transitions for sustainable food systems

- a. Transforming legal and regulatory frameworks at all levels to ensure transitions to agroecology based on integrated and coherent multi-sectoral food policies, based on long-term objectives and planning, that respect human rights, particularly the right to food
- b. Developing public policies and initiatives that adhere to universal human rights based values while responding and adapting to local contexts, that support the central role of family farmers, particularly women, in driving forward agroecology, and that are monitored for continuous improvement and accountability
- c. Ensuring that policies recognise the importance of existing and neglected agroecological systems, such as pastoralism and artisanal fisheries, for food security and economic livelihoods
- d. Opening up spaces and support for people's participation, in particular those most marginalised, in public policies and considering the specific needs of family farmers, including women and youth, by including them in policy development
- e. Changing the measures of success: developing multi-criteria indicators on the environmental, economic and social aspects of agroecology that measure the long-term performance of agroecological systems and internalising the externalised costs of agriculture including through true cost accounting
- f. Backing up these policies with the required funding and investments, including through responsible public and private investments, that support the investments of family farmers (the major investors in agroecological production systems), based on the principles of responsible agricultural investments
- g. Increasing the support to agroecology from donors and funders, including accessing climate funds for agroecology
- h. Adopting laws and budgets that support agroecology by raising awareness of agroecology among parliamentarians
- i. Promoting long-term thinking and investments by the ethical finance sector as well as a critical engagement by savers, and alliances between savers and those receiving loans in support of agroecology, also through the use of indexes such as the Agro-Biodiversity Index⁶
- j. Implementing policy and legislative mechanisms that prevent market monopolies by private sector actors whose actions block the scaling up of agroecology
- k. Sharing knowledge and experience from countries who have legal and policy frameworks on agroecology to those who are interested in developing them
- l. Analysing the impacts of subsidies on ecosystems and natural resources use and consider support for sustainable agriculture, including agroecology

⁶ The Agro-Biodiversity Index <https://www.biodiversityinternational.org/abd-index/>

- m. Developing strong regulations to preserve natural resources from pollution and degradation, to avoid negative impacts on human health and rewarding family farmers who create multiple benefits for society
- n. Strengthening international cooperation for agroecology and integrating agroecology into the work of the Rome-based agencies (FAO, IFAD and WFP) as a priority
- o. Strengthening the critical role of FAO on public policies and regulatory activities (including measurements of the performance of agriculture), creating spaces for democratic debate and platforms for discussion and negotiation to harmonise public and private strategies

5. Take agroecology to scale through integrated and participatory territorial processes

- a. Supporting territorial approaches and planning for agroecology that promote the rights of local communities to land and access to natural resources, and that integrate across sectors and reconnect the urban and rural by involving all local actors in an integrative, participatory and inclusive way
- b. Include indigenous people in territorial development processes based on the principle of Free Prior and Informed Consent (recognised under the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples)
- c. Managing conflicts in territories through open multi-sector dialogue that include the concerned parties, including indigenous peoples
- d. Support the restoration of territories to respond to the needs of family farmers in marginal areas based on success stories of agroecology that contribute to food sovereignty
- e. Ensuring that laws and policies for agroecology have continuity and real impact by continuing to strengthen the participation of civil society organisations, through participatory democracy, to ensure that their human rights are fully respected
- f. Supporting networks of cities, municipalities, territories and villages that promote agroecology linking also to initiatives to promote the right to food, such as the Milan Urban Food Policy Pact (MUFPP)
- g. Promoting youth employment through agroecology, which is knowledge and labour intensive
- h. Including territorial approaches to agroecology in climate related plans, including the Koronivia Joint Work on Agriculture at the UNFCCC