



## CFS POLICY CONVERGENCE PROCESS ON AGROECOLOGICAL AND OTHER INNOVATIVE APPROACHES

### Rapporteur's Note

#### Background

1. A discussion on the findings of the report produced by the High Level Panel of Experts for Food Security and Nutrition (HLPE) at CFS46 kicked off the policy convergence process on agroecological and other innovative approaches that is expected to conclude in October 2020 with the endorsement of a set of policy recommendations.
2. This *Rapporteur's Note*, prepared with the support of the technical focal points nominated by the Rome-based agencies (RBAs) and Bioversity International, incorporates the first round of feedback received through an open call for written inputs launched in November 2019 on the issues and topics to be addressed by the policy recommendations.
3. The structure of the *Rapporteur's Note* is in line with the five recommendations introduced by the HLPE report and its 13 Agroecological Principles (see Annex). By highlighting the main policy areas related to agroecological and other innovative approaches that are relevant to food security and nutrition, the Rapporteur's Note will set the stage for the preparation of a Zero Draft of the *CFS Policy recommendations on Agroecological and other innovative approaches*.

#### Introduction

4. The world's food and agriculture systems are at a crossroads. Globally, 820 million people remain undernourished and two billion people are overweight. In addition, an estimated 1/3 of all food produced globally is lost or goes to waste. This is in a context where natural resources and biodiversity are under increasing pressure. Sustainable agricultural production is constrained by many factors, including the increasing scarcity and diminishing quality of soil and water resources, the loss of biodiversity and ecosystem services and increasingly impacts of global warming and increased occurrence of extreme weather events.
5. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development calls for a transformation of food and agricultural systems and for all people to be critical agents of change in the process. Sustainable Development Goal 2<sup>1</sup> and specifically target 2.4 aims to ensure sustainable food production systems and implement resilient agricultural practices by 2030. In this context, agroecological and other innovative approaches should both, in an integrated way, help farming systems attain the three pillars of sustainability – social, economic, environmental – to make global agriculture more sustainable.
6. Food systems and their diversification are essential for achieving sustainable production and nutrition security. Biodiversity and ecosystem services are essential for sustainable agriculture, forestry and fisheries, as highlighted by two recent landmark global assessments: The State of the

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<sup>1</sup> End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture

World's Biodiversity for Food and Agriculture<sup>2</sup> and the Global Assessment Report on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services<sup>3</sup>.

7. In addition to states, all stakeholders involved in food systems, including private sector, civil society, academia, financing institutions, foundations and funds, local authorities and intergovernmental organizations, have a key role to play in achieving the transformation towards sustainable food systems.
8. There is no “one-size-fits-all” solution to accomplishing the transformation of food systems globally required to achieve food security and nutrition (FSN) for all. It will require supporting a diversity of transitions from different starting points, along different pathways, adapted to the local conditions and challenges faced in different places by different people.
9. Beyond context-specificity, the right to food as a universal human right is the general basis for ensuring sustainable food systems and achieving food security and nutrition for all. In line with the Voluntary Guidelines on the Right to Adequate Food in the context of National Food Security<sup>4</sup>, agroecological and other innovative approaches should support the progressive realization of the right to adequate food.
10. The CFS policy recommendations on agroecological and other innovative approaches aim to help decision-makers develop concrete actions that will encourage and support the innovation required at local, territorial, national, regional and global scales to follow appropriate transition pathways towards sustainable food systems that enhance food security and nutrition.

## **1. FOSTER THE TRANSFORMATION OF FOOD SYSTEMS THROUGH INTEGRATION OF AGROECOLOGICAL AND OTHER INNOVATIVE APPROACHES**

### ***Policy-relevant areas***

- a) Alignment to context specific priorities and needs
  - Consider local food security and nutrition situation, traditions, scale of the agricultural systems, available technology, skills, resourcing, environmental, social and regulatory systems.
  - Address accessibility and affordability of agroecological and other innovative approaches for all, including agricultural smallholder producers.
- b) Ecological footprint as an operational principle for transitioning to sustainable food systems
  - Consider environmental and social (including public health) externalities, both positive and negative, of agriculture and food systems based on available scientific evidence.

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<sup>2</sup> FAO. 2019. *The State of The World's Biodiversity for Food and Agriculture*. Available at: <http://www.fao.org/3/CA3129EN/CA3129EN.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> IPBES. 2019. *Global Assessment Report on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services*

<sup>4</sup> Adopted with consensus by the 127th Session of the FAO Council in 2004

- Strengthen research which takes into account nutritional quality and nutrient content of different food products and whether food is produced, processed, transported, sold and consumed sustainably.
- c) Integration of transdisciplinary science and local knowledge
- Strengthen co-creation and sharing of knowledge, including scientific innovation to develop and implement agroecological and other sustainable and innovative practices to address challenges across food systems.
  - Protect agricultural heritage as an important source in the reconfiguration of knowledge generation and research.
  - Contribution of social movements and problem-focused transdisciplinary science in the identification of priority issues.

## 2. SUPPORT TRANSITIONS TO DIVERSIFIED AND RESILIENT FOOD SYSTEMS

### *Policy-relevant areas*

- a) Agricultural subsidies and incentives
- In line with multilateral rules, explore the role of subsidies and incentives in fostering the transition towards sustainable food systems.
  - Consider the impact of agricultural subsidies - both positive and negative - on the economic viability of food systems.
  - Develop and use performance metrics to assess whether subsidies and incentives foster sustainability of food systems and improved food security and nutrition.
- b) Trade
- Consider the role of trade agreements and rules in relation to the goals of agroecological and other innovative approaches.
- c) Biodiversity
- Focus on conservation and sustainable use of natural resources.
  - Consider the contribution of biodiversity to a wide range of benefits (production, socio-economic, nutritional and environmental)<sup>5</sup>.
  - Consider the contribution of biodiversity to all the elements of agroecosystems, including soil health, animal welfare and water quality that are fundamental to achieve sustainable agriculture and food systems.
  - Based on scientific evidence, consider agroecological and other innovative practices as tools to adapt to climate change.

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<sup>5</sup> FAO. 2018. *Ten Elements of Agroecology*. Available at: <http://www.fao.org/3/i9037en/I9037EN.pdf>

- d) Territorial approaches
- Promote the use of integrated approaches to foster more diversified agricultural and food systems”.
- e) Genetic resources used for food and agriculture and intellectual property
- Build on existing international agreements and national regulations.
  - Incorporate intellectual property rights, including the protection of patents in trade agreements.
  - Respect the interests of farmers, including the adequate protection of farmer-saved seeds.
- f) Regulations on the use of agrochemicals
- Consider the use of organic fertilizers, supplemented with an appropriate dose of mineral fertilizer, based on scientific analysis of soils, as part of an integrated component and strategy that can lead to agroecological transitions towards sustainable food systems.
  - Strengthen neutral scientific research to assess the impact of the use of agrochemicals on human, animal and environmental health in order to inform policies and programmes with a view to reduce their use.
- g) Territorial landscape scale
- Build social capital and inclusive public bodies at territorial landscape scale, bearing in mind that scale may differ according to national realities.
- h) Healthy and diversified diets
- Promote food and nutrition education, bearing in mind the contextual nature of eating habits.
  - Promote the use of agroecological and other innovative approaches to improve healthy diets by enhancing diversification of production and in diets.
  - Enhance production of nutrient-dense foods.
  - Promote appropriate food labelling to enable conscious and informed choices leading to sustainable, diversified and healthy diets.
  - Support low-income consumers and family farmers by increasing public procurement policies including home grown school feeding programmes.
- i) Food value chain
- Support the development of local and regional markets.
  - Strengthen investment and provide incentives for young entrepreneurs, women and community-led enterprises.
  - Promote short food supply chains in order to make them a viable, accessible, and affordable alternative to mass retail outlets in favour of farmers’ markets.
  - Harnessing the use of digital technologies to strengthen links between food producers and consumers.
  - Encourage recycling systems by supporting the recycling of animal manure, crop residues, and by-products from food processing.

- Consider the reduction of food losses and waste (FLW) as an important component of the transition to sustainable food systems that enhance food security and nutrition.

### **3. STRENGTHEN SUPPORT FOR RESEARCH AND RECONFIGURE KNOWLEDGE GENERATION AND SHARING TO FOSTER CO-LEARNING**

#### ***Policy-relevant areas***

##### **a) Investment in research**

- Encourage an increase in public and private investment in research at all levels, including investment in strengthening capacity for data collection from best practices among producers, and traditional communities and researchers.
- Strengthen research in order to:
  - Encourage explicit coverage of “transitions to sustainable food Systems” in primary, secondary and tertiary education curricula.
  - Identify gaps in agroecological and biotechnological knowledge, including gaps in knowledge sharing, while ensuring that context-specific needs and capacities are taken into consideration as well as needs of agricultural producers, including women and youth.
  - Consider economic, social and environmental impacts, including assessment of practices and methods against sustainability criteria.
  - Study how agroecology can mitigate and adapt to the impacts of climate change.

##### **b) Transdisciplinary research**

- Combine global scientific knowledge with local, traditional and indigenous’ knowledge, including producers’ and traders’ knowledge.
- Strengthen co-creation and sharing of knowledge in the process of developing and implementing agroecological and other innovative practices.

##### **c) Capacity development**

- Promote learning processes on the adequate use of agroecological practices and technologies addressing social, economic, and environmental aspects.

##### **d) Co-learning for innovation**

- Establish and develop effective horizontal technology transfer mechanisms to enhance the adoption of locally-adapted technologies in agroecological and other innovative approaches by all stakeholders in the various stages of value chains of food products.

#### **4. STRENGTHEN AGENCY AND STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT, EMPOWER VULNERABLE AND MARGINALIZED GROUPS AND ADDRESS POWER INEQUALITIES IN FOOD SYSTEMS**

##### ***Policy-relevant areas***

a) Inclusiveness

- Support inclusive and democratic decision-making mechanisms at all levels in food systems.
- Take specific measures to ensure the participation of marginalized and vulnerable groups most at risk of food insecurity and malnutrition.
- Develop policies that ensure maximum access, equality and inclusion for all people.

b) Access to land and other natural resources

- Ensure legal protection of customary access and tenure rights for small-scale food producers, including women and youth, and food insecure people, in line with the Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land, Fisheries and Forests in the Context of National Food Security (VGGT).

c) Gender equality

- Recognize the centrality of women's rights and gender equality as a key driver of agroecology and other innovative approaches.
- Recognize the role of women in knowledge accumulation.
- Support gender transformative policies, programmes and actions.

d) Youth engagement

- Promote farming and other agricultural activities, including various forms of urban farming, as a desirable business opportunity for the next generation of farmers.
- Invest in rural infrastructure and services to reduce gaps between rural and urban areas and to make rural life attractive for youth.
- Acknowledge that agroecological and other innovative approaches, including digital technology, are knowledge intensive and will require new talents.

e) Rural-urban linkages

- Strengthen linkages between urban communities and food producers by including consumer cooperatives and multi-stakeholder platforms.

f) Agency

- Consider the emerging importance of agency within the definition of food security and nutrition.
- Consider the role of smallholders, peasant, indigenous, and family farmers, along with their allied movements, as central agents in the transformation of food systems.
- Recognize that medium and big size farms and industry should also be involved in the transition towards more sustainable food systems.

- Highlight the need to connect agroecological and other innovative approaches with the right to food.
- g) “Net-working” among farmers in digital technology at all levels
  - Improve networking among farmers at local, national, regional and global level on digital technology to foster transformation of food systems.
- h) Power imbalances and conflicts of interest
  - Address power imbalances and conflicts of interest in relation to the generation, validation and communication of knowledge about food production, processing and marketing

## **5. ESTABLISH AND USE COMPREHENSIVE PERFORMANCE MEASUREMENT AND MONITORING FRAMEWORKS FOR FOOD SYSTEMS**

### ***Policy-relevant areas***

- a) Performance evaluation as a basis for investment decisions and policy implementation
  - Consult agricultural producers, particularly small-scale food producers and those most affected by current production models to ensure that metrics are relevant to regional conditions and specific food products.
  - Develop a performance evaluation framework that captures and quantifies relevant multi-dimensional indicators including social, economic, political and ecological aspects of different agri-food systems on multiple scales.
- b) True cost accounting
  - Recognize the importance of true cost accounting for negative as well as positive (environmental and social, including public health) externalities in food systems and take steps to effectively implement it where appropriate.
- c) Food product certification
  - Recognize the importance of participatory guarantee systems in compliance with public policy and safety standards to certify organic and ecological products.
- d) Assessment of biotechnology
  - Promote the assessment of biotechnology in accordance with sustainability criteria.
- e) Employment and labour conditions
  - Consider the promising solution of agroecology and other innovations, based on knowledge intensive, environmental friendly, socially responsible and innovative, to preserve existing and promote decent job creation<sup>6</sup>.

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<sup>6</sup> FAO. 2018. *Ten Elements of Agroecology*. Available at: <http://www.fao.org/3/i9037en/I9037EN.pdf>

## ANNEX

Table 1 Consolidated set of 13 agroecological principles

Principle	FAO's ten elements	Scale application*
<i>Improve resource efficiency</i>		
<b>1. Recycling.</b> Preferentially use local renewable resources and close as far as possible resource cycles of nutrients and biomass.	Recycling	FI, FA
<b>2. Input reduction.</b> Reduce or eliminate dependency on purchased inputs and increase self-sufficiency	Efficiency	FA, FO
<i>Strengthen resilience</i>		
<b>3. Soil health.</b> Secure and enhance soil health and functioning for improved plant growth, particularly by managing organic matter and enhancing soil biological activity.		FI
<b>4. Animal health.</b> Ensure animal health and welfare.		FI, FA
<b>5. Biodiversity.</b> Maintain and enhance diversity of species, functional diversity and genetic resources and thereby maintain overall agroecosystem biodiversity in time and space at field, farm and landscape scales.	Part of diversity	FI, FA
<b>6. Synergy.</b> Enhance positive ecological interaction, synergy, integration and complementarity among the elements of agroecosystems (animals, crops, trees, soil and water).	Synergy	FI, FA
<b>7. Economic diversification.</b> Diversify on-farm incomes by ensuring that small-scale farmers have greater financial independence and value addition opportunities while enabling them to respond to demand from consumers.	Part of diversity	FA, FO
<i>Secure social equity/responsibility</i>		
<b>8. Co-creation of knowledge.</b> Enhance co-creation and horizontal sharing of knowledge including local and scientific innovation, especially through farmer-to-farmer exchange.	Co-creation and sharing of knowledge	FA, FO
<b>9. Social values and diets.</b> Build food systems based on the culture, identity, tradition, social and gender equity of local communities that provide healthy, diversified, seasonally and culturally appropriate diets.	Parts of human and social values and culture and food traditions	FA, FO
<b>10. Fairness.</b> Support dignified and robust livelihoods for all actors engaged in food systems, especially small-scale food producers, based on fair trade, fair employment and fair treatment of intellectual property rights.		FA, FO
<b>11. Connectivity.</b> Ensure proximity and confidence between producers and consumers through promotion of fair and short distribution networks and by re-embedding food systems into local economies.	Circular and solidarity economy	FA
<b>12. Land and natural resource governance.</b> Strengthen institutional arrangements to improve, including the recognition and support of family farmers, smallholders and peasant food producers as sustainable managers of natural and genetic resources.	Responsible governance	FA, FO
<b>13. Participation.</b> Encourage social organization and greater participation in decision-making by food producers and consumers to support decentralized governance and local adaptive management of agricultural and food systems.		FO

\*Scale application: FI = field; FA = farm, agroecosystem; FO = food system  
 Source: derived from from Nicholls et al., 2016; CIDSE, 2018; FAO, 2018c.