

German inputs for the Zero Draft: CFS policy recommendations for agroecology

A major theme of the CFS' policy recommendations should be the development of a **Performance Evaluation / Monitoring Framework**. Assessing the performance of agricultural systems (including agroecological approaches and conventional farming systems) requires a comprehensive analytical framework. Such a framework should be able to capture and quantify relevant multi-dimensional indicators including social, economic, political and ecological aspects of different agri-food systems on multiple scales. Such a framework is key to analyze the multiple contributions and impacts agroecological and other agri-food systems have on wider ecological and socioeconomic systems. The FAO's current development of an analytical framework for the multi-dimensional assessment of agroecology may provide a good starting point but may need further refinement in order to be applicable to agri-food systems in general.

In order to make a compelling case for the necessity of transforming the global agri-food systems towards agroecological principles, the document should make reference to the following international processes:

a) **Global agenda linking climate change and agriculture:**

- i. **Adaptation:** with roughly half the world population directly relying on agriculture for their livelihoods, strengthening resilience to climate-related risks is key to achieving the SDGs, notably SDG 2. A recently published background paper for the Global Commission on Adaptation (GCA) highlighted the contribution of agroecological approaches to realizing climate-resilient agriculture¹. Furthermore, agriculture features prominently in most developing countries' NDCs.
- ii. **Mitigation:** in August 2019, the IPCC's special report on climate change and land² highlighted that agriculture, forestry and other land-use are responsible for some 23% of global greenhouse gas emissions. The agri-food system as a whole (including upstream processes, production, transport, processing, consumption, waste and loss) is responsible for up to 37% of global emissions. Reaching the targets agreed upon in the Paris Agreement, the IPCC concludes, is not possible without considerable reductions of emissions in the global agri-food system. Promoting agroecology as a means to bring together mitigation and adaptation may play a key role in the NDC-Partnership.

b) **Global biodiversity agenda:** published in May 2019, the IPBES Global Assessment highlighted the profound impacts human livelihoods have on the natural world. The report confirmed agriculture and related land-use changes as one of the key drivers of global biodiversity loss and ecosystem decline. Against this backdrop, transforming the agri-food system is critical for reversing these trends. The ecosystem-based and resource-efficient approach promoted by agroecology could make a significant contribution in this transformation. The CFS' recommendations should acknowledge this potential and make explicit references to the global biodiversity agenda (CBD, IPBES).

c) **Soil protection and rehabilitation (UNCCD):** combating and reversing desertification and land degradation in general is key not only for ensuring food

¹ <https://cdn.gca.org/assets/2019-09/TheContributionsOfAgroecologicalApproaches.pdf>

² Full title: IPCC special report on climate change, desertification, land degradation, sustainable land management, food security, and greenhouse gas fluxes in terrestrial ecosystems,

security but also for safeguarding soils as important carbon sink. By minimizing the use of agrochemical products and enhancing soil fertility through practices such as intercropping or green manure, agroecology contributes to reversing land degradation. The zero draft should acknowledge the potentials of agroecology to contribute to a reversal of these trends.

- d) **International agricultural research (CGIAR):** Agricultural research plays a key role in developing and testing new technologies, inputs, and techniques of production. It is thus instrumental in shaping the global agricultural agenda. However, funding for agroecological research is virtually non-existent. The CFS' policy recommendations should encourage increased funding for research on agroecological approaches in particular but also in more general terms to understand the complexity of agricultural and food systems and their interactions with the environment notably within but not excluded to the CGIAR-system. In line with the principles of agroecology, the focus should be on the co-creation of knowledge through an interplay of local and traditional ecological knowledge as well as scientific research.
- e) **UN Decade of Family Farming:** Family farmers produce over 80% of world's food often in diversified agricultural systems. Family farmers can thus preserve traditional food products, contributing to both a balanced diet and the protection of the world's agro-biodiversity. Launched on 29 May 2019 in Rome, the Decade of Family Farming (2019-2028) aims at focusing the efforts of the international community to work collectively on the design and implementation of comprehensive economic, environmental and social policies in order to create a conducive environment and strengthen the position of family farming³. Agroecology as a science, practice and social movement acknowledges and supports the contributions of family farms.
- f) **UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration:** on 1 March 2019, the UN General Assembly declared the UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration (2021-2030). Agroecological approaches can make a vital contribution to restoring soils, forests, and other terrestrial ecosystems, enhancing food security, water supply, biodiversity, climate mitigation and adaptation.

³ <http://www.fao.org/family-farming/decade/en/>