

1st Dialogue on Agroecology in Balkans and adjacent Countries

3 – 4 April 2019

Tirana

BACKGROUND

Agroecology¹ is rooted in agricultural heritage systems based on small-scale food producers from all food sectors (pastoralism, fisheries, forestry and agriculture). It contributes to building resilient food systems, starting with greater integration of biodiversity into agricultural production systems and landscapes. By diversifying production, agroecology also contributes to diversified and healthy diets. It replaces costly external inputs with the management of local biodiversity and ecosystem services based on the combined knowledge of family farmers and science creating more resilient communities including by creating off-farm job opportunities.

Agroecology also provides opportunities for multiple sources of income, through processing, marketing and agro-tourism. Agroecology produces more than healthy food. It produces fertile soils, clean water, biodiversity, beautiful landscapes and places where citizens can meet one another and re-connect to nature and agriculture. The characteristics of agroecology (reduced chemical inputs, knowledge-intensive not capital-intensive, closer links between producers and consumers, more inclusive governance with greater participation in decision-making) hold the potential to rebalance power relations in food systems, strengthening family farming and ensuring a better quality of life in rural areas.

The transition to agroecology will entail a real transformation, not only of farming practices but also in terms of markets, policies, land, and other natural sources. It is necessary to engage all relevant sectors and involves different stakeholders, including consumers and small-scale food producers, to participate in the awareness-raising and decision-making processes concerning territorial food systems, markets, and trade, and create a supportive policy environment for bottom-up, local, sustainable food systems initiatives. Taking a food system approach, involving all relevant sectors and the participation of all stakeholders combined with a broad adoption of agroecology, will have the potential to greatly accelerate the transition towards making food and agricultural systems and livelihoods more sustainable and resilient to the impacts of climate change, in line with the various international commitments made by countries of the region.

Agroecology can play an important role in helping Balkans and adjacent countries to accomplish the SDGs. With its holistic approach, agroecology provides an opportunity to target in an integrated way challenges related to climate change, environmental degradation, nutrition, health, and socio-economics issues transforming the agriculture sector in a strong component for the achievement of the SDGs.

¹ In 2014 FAO organized the 1st International Symposium on Agroecology for Food Security and Nutrition in Rome. Following the international symposium, a series of regional meetings (Brazil, Thailand, Senegal, China, Bolivia, Hungary, Senegal) were held in 2015 and 2016. These meetings involved approximately 1,350 multi-stakeholder participants from 162 member countries. The meetings identified possible actions and public policies that could support the better development of agroecology in their regions.

OBJECTIVE

Share information and practices on challenges and opportunities on Agroecology in Balkans and adjacent countries;

Expected outputs:

- Awareness raised on the multiples benefits agroecology can provide in Balkans and adjacent countries
- Knowledge and practices on agroecology among the stakeholders shared
- Priority for the agenda in the region identified and next steps defined

METHODOLOGY AND PROGRAMME

In order to produce a successful workshop, FAO would like to involve the participates in a pre-consultation process to collect relevant information regarding the current status of agroecology in Central Asia. The consultation process will allow FAO to prepare an overview of the status of agroecology in the region and tailor the discussion during the workshop.

Preparatory consultation process

FAO will send a questionnaire to key actors in the government (policy developers, including local governments and food producers' organizations and other relevant CSO actors to gather information at national and local level (Annex 1). This process will provide a better understanding of the potentialities and constraints to develop the agroecology agenda in the region.

Workshop program

2 day-workshop to discuss the status of agroecology in the region. Information collected during the preparatory process will be used as a base for the discussion. The workshop will use a participatory methodology to be proposed based on the expected outputs. All methodologies have to promote dialogue and knowledge sharing.

Day 1

*Morning – **What is agroecology for Balkans and adjacent countries***

Short presentation on what is agroecology followed by a discussion using fish bowl methodology

Afternoon - Working groups

Working group activities (3 working groups)

WG 1 – opportunities and constraints for agroecology in the region

WG 2 – platforms and networks for knowledge and practices sharing

WG 3 – priorities actions to mainstream agroecology in the region

Day 2

Morning

Working group activities continue

Report from the working groups (1 hour)

*Afternoon - **Agroecology in the region***

Final report from the working groups

Definition of the work plan and priority actions for the region

TARGET AUDIENCE

This workshop will target 8 countries (Georgia, Armenia, Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia, Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Moldova) and four different groups of stakeholders:

- Policymakers,
- Food producers' organization and other relevant CSO actors
- Academia
- FAO national staffs

It is expected 34 participants in the workshop, which 24 will be sponsored by FAO (one policymaker and one CSO representative from each country, 4 FAO national staffs and 4 researchers). Also, FAO will extend the invitation to European Union countries and potential donors and the private sector that have ongoing work on agroecology and other countries in the region.

BUDGET

| COSTS | USD |
|---|---------------|
| Sponsored participants (travel and DSA) | 26 000 |
| Interpretation and translation | 1 000 |
| Logistic (e.g space for the meeting) | 1 000 |
| Communication, exhibition material | 1 000 |
| TOTAL | 29 000 |

Annex 1 – Mapping of the current status of agroecology in Balkans and adjacent

Agroecology is an integrated approach that simultaneously applies ecological economic, cultural and social concepts and principles to the design and management of food and agricultural systems, increasing resilience of the rural areas. The characteristics of agroecology (e.g. reduced chemical inputs, knowledge-intensive, short value chain, inclusive governance) hold the potential to rebalance the food systems. The magnitude of this challenge requires strong political will and broad stakeholder involvement and different sectors need to be involved.

This questionnaire aims to collect the current status of agroecology, potentialities, and constraints that may need to be overcome to foster an agroecological transition.

Please answer each of the questions below and if you have relevant data, report, case studies that can be useful, please add the links.

1. What does agroecology mean to you?
2. What are the benefits you expect when you look toward an agroecological transition?
3. What are the challenges you expect when you look toward an agroecological transition?
4. Are you involved in any project/farm that is promoting and developing agroecological systems? If yes, please describe the project/farm, including numbers and links if available.
5. Does the national extension service promote agroecology, sustainable agriculture approaches or the integration of ecosystem services into the agriculture systems?
6. Is agroecology part of the universities curriculum in your country?
7. Are you aware of research programs on agroecology or on participatory research approaches? Are small-scale food-producer organizations and other relevant CSO actors involved in those programmes? How?
8. Does your country has any system to promote and protect traditional and local knowledge?
9. Do you have specific credit lines for agroecology? And for family farmers/smallholder farmers?
10. Does your country have subsidies and incentives that can create barriers to an agroecological transition?
11. Does your country/municipality have public procurement programmes and school feeding programmes linked to agroecological production, local production or smallholders and farmers' production? If yes, how they work?
12. Do you have national experiences on community-supported agriculture schemes, e-commerce and participatory guarantee schemes? If yes, what are they?
13. Does the national sanitary and phytosanitary measures create barriers for smallholder farmers to access markets? If yes, which ones?
14. Does your country implement the Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land, Fisheries, and Forests in the Context of National Food Security?
15. Does your country implement the FAO Voluntary Guidelines for Securing Sustainable Small-Scale Fisheries?
16. Does your country recognize the food producers' organizations and other relevant CSO actors' role and include them in public decisions? If yes, how?
17. Does your country/municipality have cross-sectorial committees and commissions to discuss inter-sectorial policies implementation? If yes, how?