



To,
Ambassador Mohammad Hossein Emadi,
Chair, UN Committee on Food Security,
Rome.

Dear Ambassador Mohammad Hossein Emadi,

Institute of Agriculture and Trade Policy (IATP) is based in Minneapolis in mid-west USA, and for more than 30 years we have been advancing fair and sustainable food, farm and trade systems that are good for people, farmers, food system workers, ecosystems and social justice both locally and globally. We at IATP want to thank you for inviting all CFS participants to share our views on priority issues that need to be addressed during the CFS policy convergence process on *Agroecological and other innovative approaches for sustainable agriculture and food systems that enhance food security and nutrition*, towards the formulation of the zero draft of the decision box.

UN CFS is the foremost inclusive international multi-stakeholder mechanism, and we are grateful for the opportunity to support these efforts by CFS to address the food security of over 800 million people – who are food-insecure despite being engaged in food production, collection or processing.

We are delighted that the CFS has initiated the policy convergence process of HLPE (#14) report; and we hope that the outcomes of this process brings each and every country closer to truly transforming their food systems to become sustainable in a truly holistic sense.

1. *Do you think that the recommendations in the HLPE report accurately reflect the findings of the report?*

The HLPE Report #14 has provided a strong conceptual framework that is holistic, to help assess all the innovative approaches in terms of their ability to bring about transformational change to our agriculture and food systems.

The text of the report gives us enough material (for example, calling for public policies and public investments in support of *AE approaches*) that leads us to believe that *AE approaches* need additional support so as not to be squeezed out of existence. In fact, with a level playing field, it has the potential to provide the world with healthy and nutritious food to help feed the worlds food-insecure communities. However, despite clear evidence within the report showing,

- a. That, of all the *innovative approaches* that were assessed, *agroecological (AE) approaches* are the only ones capable about bringing about a transformational change, that is holistic,

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- b. That very little financial or institutional support is available to those practising *AE approaches*, and the little available is miniscule in comparison to the fund-flows to other kind of approaches,

in the summary and recommendations there is no clear recommendation recommending targeted funding and institutional support for *agroecological approaches* compared to *other innovative approaches*; and recommending the creation of a level playing field (*AE approaches vs. other approaches*).

The concept of *ecological footprint*, suggested as tool for assessing these innovative approaches is very helpful in understanding why *AE approaches* are considered holistic (even though AE is not focussed any one specific problem, be it climate crisis or water scarcity, it addresses all simultaneously, as can be inferred from the report). *Other innovative approaches*, on the other hand, often address one specific problem, say, ‘adapting’ with a specific trait, but likely causing other negative environmental/health impacts. We hope policy convergence process will make use of the recommendation on *ecological footprint* to further underline the appropriateness of the *AE approaches* to help us address multiple environmental challenges—biodiversity crisis, water pollution, water scarcity, global warming—that we face today.

We hope that the convergence process can clarify, in the draft decision box, how and why at this juncture in time, it is absolutely a must to help agroecological research and practices thrive. We hope that the process will also recommend that members enable this through targeted, financial and institutional support to help creat a level playing field where AE approaches can thrive.

2. *Do you think that major problems are missing from the HLPE recommendations?*

HLPE report recognises that *agroecological approaches (AE)* including organic, permaculture, etc. and those of "Sustainable Intensification" (SI) approaches emerge from fundamentally different philosophical and ideological commitments. However, most recommendations gloss over the fundamental differences. Drawing from an area of expertise for us at IATP, we can assert that while SI approaches thrive under current market regimes and current trade rules, AE approaches wither under those.

Clearly, then, it is not adequate to simply provide targeted public investments and institutional support to help advance *AE approaches* (as discussed in the report, even if not in the recommendations). While the Report does make references to issues such as trade and corporate power, it does not dwell adequately on the issue of policy coherence. These concerns will likely be of interest to many member governments. For example:

1. What kind of trade rules or market policies can help advance sustainability (i.e. looking at climate, water, and biodiversity footprints) and agroecological approaches to support progressive realization of the Right to Food, and without jeopardising national and local food security concerns?(See from IATP: [Trade-vs-local-economies: procurement-on-the-table](#))
2. What kind of financing mechanisms can be availed under Green Climate Fund (GCF), to advance climate adaptation, given that GCF will have agriculture as a sector in it

next cycle? (See [Financing-climate-resilience-through-agroecology](#) that IATP put forward in 2015)

A recommendation on member countries having *Agroecological approaches* as the key, *holistic*, tool for national adaptation plans not only help ensure policy coherence with Koronivia Joint Work on Agriculture (KJWA), but also with the emerging; it might also help member countries avail GCF funds to advance *AE approaches*. In addition, we hope to see an additional recommendation on member countries advancing *AE approaches* as part of the post 2020 Global Biodiversity framework (GBF). A recent ([embargoed](#)) letter from over 360 scientists worldwide recommends that member govts and GBF targets consider agroecology as key to addressing biodiversity crisis.

We hope convergence process will address the issue of policy convergence related challenges in a number of areas, including trade, climate and biodiversity policies, but not limited to them.

3. *Can you give examples of policies related to agro-ecological systems and other innovation systems for sustainable food systems that ensure food security and nutrition? How were these policies formulated and what was their impact?*

A number of case studies have been made available both by the HLPE and also by FAO agroecology knowledge hub. We have gleaned from those context specific case studies that:

1. While for some *AE approaches* are part of indigenous practices, for others it emerges in response to crisis (financial crisis leading to experimenting without expensive inputs; or water crisis leading to innovative solutions)
2. *AE approaches* are built on the firm foundations of traditional knowledge, and are enhanced by scientific enquiry and peoples-farmers-workers-consumers- networks
3. *AE approaches* are about nurturing nature as nature nurtures us
4. *AE approaches* **have the potential** to build resilient and justice focussed communities
5. Most *AE approaches* have thrived despite lack of institutional support, and adverse market conditions

All of this points to the need for research in identifying the gaps in knowledge on how public policy in other sectors intersects with agroecology, in identifying gaps in agroecological knowledge, in ensuring that those practicing *AE approaches* are in the driving seat of this research formulation, in identifying gaps in gender specific and worker specific knowledge as to how *AE approaches* can also lead to a just society that is both economically and ecologically resilient.

4. *Are there any other thoughts that you think should be taken into account by the CFS as part of this policy convergence process?*

Two of our staff were at CFS this year. It appeared to us from some of the side events during CFS that there is an attempt to paint agroecology as one of the many approaches that is good for transformation towards a truly sustainable food system. This is clearly a false assertion if we read the HLPE report, which recommends that ecological footprint be used for assessing these approaches. The other observation was that several advocates of sustainable

intensification have now started calling these practices agroecological, even though none of those practices would be agroecological as per the 13 principles elaborated in the HLPE report, or by the 10 elements of agroecology developed by FAO agroecology hub. We hope the convergence process will stay clear of these knowledge traps.

While transformational change does not happen overnight, no system can completely transform to *AE approaches* until policy coherence is ensured across sectors. It is crucial that policy convergence draw attention to the **transformational potential of agroecology in comparison to other innovative approaches**, as HLPE report clearly stressed in the body of the text (though not in recommendations), with emphasis on the 13 agroecological principles outlined in HLPE.

Additional thoughts:

During recent North America Regional Consultations hosted by the chair of the Nutrition working group in DC in late November (which we took part as online-participant), it became clear how those working in the food and nutrition sector too are craving for the same kind of changes that we are talking of here. Ensuring policy coherence would require us to explore how some *AE approaches* can contribute to better food and nutrition outcomes, and achieve these at a much lower cost for consumers, producers and workers. It also requires governments investing in building of fair-trade focused regional markets.

While we recognise that HLPE has not given us a clear recommendation on why *Agroecology* is a clear winner compared to *other innovative approaches*, the presentation by the team leader during CFS46 was unequivocally clear as to why *AE approaches* gives answers to ecological, social & economic challenges in our food and ag systems, and to my mind was able to satisfactorily answer questions from the plenary. We hope the policy convergence process is able to build on the presentation by the HLPE to clearly recommend why AE approaches need to be supported over and above other approaches so as to create a level playing field where community led solutions can compete with corporate led solutions to address the issue of food security concerns, one with attention to ecological footprint and locally driven solutions for nutritious food while other with primary foci on long-term corporate profits.

Finally, we wish every country success in progressive realization of the right to food, enabled through the recognition of *agency* of their citizenry, and through transforming our agriculture and food systems to be truly sustainable. Thank you,

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