

1st Dialogue on Agroecology in Central Asia Countries

28 – 29 August 2019

Bishkek

BACKGROUND

Agroecology¹ is an integrated approach that simultaneously applies ecological and social concepts and principles to the design and management of food and agricultural systems. It seeks to optimize the interactions between plants, animals, humans and the environment while taking into consideration the social aspects that need to be addressed for a sustainable and fair food system. It is part of the FAO's Common Vision for Sustainable Food and Agriculture² and it is a key part of the global response to this climate of instability, offering a unique approach to meeting significant increases in our food needs of the future while ensuring no one is left behind. Moreover, environmental degradation and climate change highlight an importance and urgency of the rethinking the whole basis of food and farming systems by improving the relationships between agriculture and the environment, and between food systems and society.

There is a rapidly growing body of evidence on the potential of agroecological systems to deliver mutually reinforcing benefits and to sustain them over time as well as to limit losses and enable recovery in the face of environmental stresses and shocks resulting from climate change. Diversified agroecological production strategies also can contribute to more resilient livelihoods. Lower dependence on external inputs reduces production costs and improves profitability. The reduced use of external inputs, contributes to reductions in greenhouse gas emissions, while the strategies that replace external inputs, contribute to both climate change adaptation and mitigation. Various options of shorter supply chains with closer links between producers and consumers establish longer-term relationships of trust and provide higher prices to producers by reducing intermediaries but still offer affordable prices for consumers. Agroecology also can help countries in meeting their climate change mitigation targets and practices and actions need to be enhanced.

Agroecology also, as part of an integrated landscape management approach, offers a pathway to implementing the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in an integrated manner, contributing directly to at least 10 of the 17 goals. Consequently, during the 31st Regional Conference, countries requested³ FAO to support a food systems approach in rural and urban policies and planning and incorporate agroecological approaches and diversification into the regional work and bolster its work on agroecology in the context of the United Nations Decade of Family Farming (2019–2028) and the Scaling-up Agroecology Initiative. Supportive policies and incentives for the development of alternative markets for agroecological products will be needed, and public procurement should be used to create and support markets for these products.

With this first Dialogue, FAO would like to strength agroecological systems, reinforce the dialogue among different stakeholders and define jointly actions and priorities for countries and territories in the region.

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.

² FAO's Common Vision for Sustainable Food and Agriculture balances the social, economic and environmental dimensions of sustainability across agricultural landscape and seascape mosaics. It outlines general principles for sustainable food and agricultural systems that are highly productive, economically viable and environmentally sound, contributing to equity and social justice. The five FAO principles for Sustainable Food and Agriculture are: 1) improving efficiency in the use of resources; 2) conserving, protecting and enhancing natural ecosystems; 3) protecting and improving rural livelihoods, equity and social well-being; 4) enhancing the resilience of people, communities and ecosystems; 5) promoting good governance of both natural and human systems.

³ Report of the Thirty-first Session of the FAO Regional Conference for Europe <http://www.fao.org/3/mw908en/mw908en.pdf> and Sustainable Agriculture and Food Systems in Europe and Central Asia in a Changing Climate <http://www.fao.org/3/MW105EN/mw105en.pdf>

OBJECTIVE

Share information and practices on challenges and opportunities on Agroecology in Central Asia countries;

Expected outputs:

- Awareness raised on the multiples benefits agroecology can provide in Central Asia 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.

TARGET AUDIENCE

This workshop will target 8 countries (Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkey, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Ukraine and Belarus) and four different groups of stakeholders (Policymakers, Food producers' organization and other relevant CSO actors, Academia and FAO national staffs).

Day 1	Day 2
<i>What is Agroecology?</i>	<i>Agroecology and the Decade of Family farming</i>
<i>Agroecology in Western Balkans and Caucasus</i>	<i>Opportunities and constraints for agroecology in the region</i>
<i>Overview of the online consultation</i>	<i>Definition of the work plan and priority actions at national/territorial level</i>
<i>Agroecology, Food and Nutritional security and Innovative Markets</i>	<i>Definition of the work plan and priority actions at regional</i>
<i>Complementation and validation of the online consultation</i>	<i>The status of agroecology in ECA countries</i>
<i>Gender and Agroecology</i>	<i>Next steps and closing remarks and evaluation</i>

It is expected 30 participants in the workshop, which 24 will be sponsored by FAO (one policymaker and CSO representative from each country, 4 FAO national staffs and 4 researchers). Also, FAO will extend the invitation to Russia as member of the Eurasian Union and potential donors and the private sector that have ongoing work on agroecology and other countries in the region.

Annex 1 – Mapping of the current status of agroecology in Central Asia

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. What is the position of the national policies/strategies on agroecology? Does the current regulatory framework help or create constraints to the implementation of agroecological?
9. Does your country has any system to promote and protect traditional and local knowledge?
10. Do you have specific credit lines for agroecology? And for family farmers/smallholder farmers?
11. Does your country have subsidies and incentives that can create barriers to an agroecological transition?
12. 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?
13. Do you have national experiences on community-supported agriculture schemes, e-commerce and participatory guarantee schemes? If yes, what are they?
14. Does the national sanitary and phytosanitary measures create barriers for smallholder farmers to access markets? If yes, which ones?
15. 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?
16. Does your country implement the FAO Voluntary Guidelines for Securing Sustainable Small-Scale Fisheries?
17. Does your country recognize the food producers' organizations and other relevant CSO actors' role and include them in public decisions? If yes, how?
18. Does your country/municipality have cross-sectorial committees and commissions to discuss inter-sectorial policies implementation? If yes, how?
19. Could you share with us existing/traditional techniques in the region that can be overlapped/similar to Agroecology
20. Do you think agroecology can help mitigation and adaptation,? If yes, Which practices/ techniques you recommend?
21. Do you think Agroecology can support the overcoming of gender gap? Do you have any experiences you would like to share?