



workshop results

FOSTERING AGROECOLOGICAL TRANSITIONS

ONLINE
21 JUNE 2023



main issue

Unsustainable agricultural practices - such as reliance on excess chemical inputs, monocropping, deforestation and water mismanagement - can have long-lasting negative consequences on the environment, human health, and the ability to produce food sustainably. More sustainable agricultural and food systems based on the principles of agroecology are therefore crucial. **Agroecological practices are in harmony with nature and people and build resilience among smallholder farmers, ensure food security and support the ecosystem.**

This workshop enabled SSNUP stakeholders to better understand agroecology and exchange project design experiences to successfully create incentives for the adoption of agroecological practices.

key takeaways



Agroecology takes a holistic approach to agriculture

Many agricultural concepts share the same objective of sustainably improve agricultural systems, including climate-smart, conservation, ecological and organic farming, precision, regenerative agriculture, permaculture. While they all aim to improve the sustainability of agricultural systems, most only focus on farming techniques.

Agroecological principles are comprehensive and consider food production's ecological, social, political, and economic dimensions (HLPE, 2019). The steps in the transition from conventional agriculture to globally sustainable systems are gradual, from increasing the efficiency of industrial inputs to redesigning the agroecosystem and finally leading to a fully transformed food system and society (Gliessman, 2016).



Unsupportive sociopolitical context is a key challenge

Farmers face many challenges in adopting agroecological practices, such as limited access to technical support, difficulties accessing credit adapted to their business needs and insecure land tenure. In addition, existing support tends to be geared toward overly specialised value chains, whereas agroecological farming systems are more diversified. Political will, policy incentives, technical assistance, and co-design research to promote agroecology still need to be fostered.

SPEAKERS



Nadine Andrieu
—
Senior Agronomist
CIRAD

Nadine Andrieu is the focal point of CIRAD's Agroecological Transitions priority research programme. She has extensive experience designing innovative agroecological systems with farmers in developing countries.



Jonathan Mockshell
—
Senior Agricultural Economist
CIAT

Jonathan Mockshell leads the Private Sector Incentives and Investments project, which aims to leverage investments and incentive mechanisms for transitioning to sustainable food systems.



Nathalie van Haren
—
Senior Officer
Both ENDS

Nathalie van Haren works with Drynet - a network of civil society organisations supporting initiatives of local communities, farmers, pastoralists, and women in drylands to combat desertification, land degradation and drought.



3 } Research is helping to prove the viability of agroecology


A recent study by CIFOR-ICRAF & CIRAD (2023) found that farmers in Africa widely adopt agroecological practices for both economic and non-economic reasons, such as increased yield and income, reduced input costs, soil quality, biodiversity, better health, and social benefits.


The study also found that farmers do not always view labour as a constraint because – on the contrary – agroecology can reduce work in the long term. Some farmers also reported that the overall costs and benefits are well spread out over time and between different tasks. The fact that farmers already see benefits from agroecological practices despite a lack of support demonstrates the viability of agroecology.


4 } Agroecology combines traditional and modern knowledge and techniques in an innovative manner

Agroecology combines traditional farming practices with local and scientific knowledge and is adaptive to every context and ecosystem. Innovation is encouraged by sharing and co-creating knowledge between farmers, scientists, and civil society organisations. Projects for fostering agroecology should therefore:

- **recognise the central role of farmers** who possess local knowledge and know their technical and funding needs best;
- **rely on community-based processes** to deliver contextualised solutions to local problems, thereby empowering farmers and communities as key change agents;
- **encourage donors and funds** to actively finance knowledge sharing and learning within and between all relevant stakeholders; and
- **have flexible funding periods**, which should be long enough to develop solid collaboration between stakeholders and to document the outcomes.

Both ENDS (2022). 
[How donors and funds can accelerate the agroecological transition: recommendations from the AVACLIM project](#)

CIFOR-ICRAF & CIRAD (2023). 
[Agroecological practices are widely used by African farmers](#)

Gliessman (2016). 
[Transforming food systems with agroecology](#)

Biovision. 
[B-ACT: Business Agroecology Criteria Tool](#)

5 } Incentive mechanisms can encourage agroecological practices

Agroecological incentive mechanisms can be divided into **four main types** (Mockshell et al., 2023):


- 1 **market incentives**
- 2 **non-market incentives**
- 3 **regulatory incentives**
- 4 **cross-compliance incentives**

Incentives can encourage agroecological practices and generate economic, environmental, and social outcomes. Financial market incentives such as certification labels and price premiums supported by the private sector are common for export crops. In contrast, the public sector often uses non-market incentives for food crops. Incentives should be inclusive and tailored to specific contexts and commodities, while too many requirements risk creating disincentives.

Agroecological incentive types and examples

Types	Examples
Market incentives	price, price premiums, certification labels, sustainability standards, etc.
Non-market incentives	membership in farmer groups, technical support, extension services, training, technology transfer, etc.
Regulatory incentives	environmental laws, taxes, subsidies, public procurement programmes, etc.
Cross-compliance incentives	payments for ecosystem services, participatory guarantee systems, income transfer, etc.

FURTHER INFORMATION

HLPE (2019). 
[Agroecological and other innovative approaches for sustainable agriculture and food systems that enhance food security and nutrition](#)



Mockshell et al. (2023). 
[Transitioning to agroecological food systems: A review of incentives for adoption of agroecological practices and outcomes](#)

Table. 
[Exploring the ebbs and flows of different agricultural movements](#)

SSNUP is a 10-year programme that aims to strengthen the safety nets of 10 million smallholder households in Africa, Latin America, and Asia through technical assistance projects supporting the development of and promoting investment in agricultural value chains. Regular workshops enable stakeholders to exchange project experiences, and lessons learnt.

Please contact SSNUP Knowledge Management team for more information:
Mathilde Bauwin and Thu Hien Dao: ssnup@ada-microfinance.lu