

AGROECOLOGY FOR FUTURE

SHAPING EU FOOD POLICIES FOR A GLOBAL FOOD TRANSITION

Agroecological production methods have a long tradition in many countries of the Global South. Recently, agroecology has been attracting increasing interest as an alternative to industrialized agriculture. At the United Nations level, agroecology is recognized as having the potential to facilitate the transformative change in agriculture needed to meet the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Case studies from around the world **demonstrate agroecology's capacity to provide economic, social, and food security benefits** while **ensuring climate justice and restoring soils and the environment**. It involves supporting diverse forms of smallholder food production and family farming, empowering peasants, indigenous communities and women.

Agroecology is a holistic approach and should be viewed with its demand for societal change. It also employs a context-specific approach which can be seen in the *Agroecology Declaration of Nyéléni* (2015), the *FAO's Ten Elements of Agroecology*, and the consolidated *13 agroecological principles* from the FAO Committee on Food Security High Level Panel of Experts (HLPE).

Those principles and elements frame the vision for what needs to be taken into account in all relevant policies to support agroecology, whether at international, European, national, regional or local levels.

Agroecology is described as a concept that is science, practice, and social movement. It is seen as a holistic concept highlighting the interaction between all areas. Agroecology is deeply linked to peasants' rights, the right to food and food sovereignty. All EU policies related to agriculture and food systems must rely hereupon.

The transition to agroecology makes it necessary for European policies to reduce the global negative environmental and social footprint of the current European agriculture and food systems. Policy coherence is fundamental in achieving the objectives of the EU Green Deal, including the *Farm to Fork* (F2F) and the *Biodiversity strategies*.

Public policies should challenge the current model and nurture diverse and decentralized forms of agroecology-based food production. This will guarantee access to quality food, the survival of European farms, fair income for farmers, and protect peasants' rights.

We call on the members of the European Parliament and political decision-makers on a national level to implement step-by-step agroecological principles in all related policies.

OUR DEMANDS

- Overall, the EU must ensure that **food and agricultural policies** are in line with the **UN Declaration on the Rights of Peasants and Other People Working in Rural Areas** (UNDROP) as well as the **UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples** (UNDRIP) to avoid discrimination and prevent the violation of human, economic and social rights of small-scale farmers, agricultural and migrant workers and Indigenous Peoples. **Essential for agroecology are the right to land, seeds, biodiversity, and the right to food sovereignty.**
- The **EU development policy** should be reorientated towards agroecology in order to **build sustainable food systems in non-EU countries** and increase the budgeted amounts. This implies to **gradually stop the use of synthetic fertilizers and pesticides** in their projects. Initiatives should be led by and focused on smallholder woman farmers and small-scale food producers in particular.
- The EU is urged to protect the **peasants' rights to save, use, exchange and sell their own seeds** and **reform intellectual property laws on seeds** to protect farmers' and indigenous rights, to ban the patenting of seeds and to enforce the right to farm-saved seed globally.
- The **Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) national strategic plans** should reflect the **goals of the Green Deal** and contribute to reaching the **targets of the F2F strategy**. Improvement of food systems and the *legislative Framework for Sustainable Food Systems* (FSFS) must be addressed in accordance with the CAP and other trade laws. Therefore, the **CAP should set clear and rigorous objectives holding member states accountable to properly address current environmental and societal challenges, including negative impacts beyond Europe's borders**. CAP and the FSFS must ensure support towards a fair agroecological transition.
- The EU is urged to present the announced **legislative Framework for Sustainable Food Systems (FSFS)** as a central component of the Green Deal in a timely manner. The FSFS constitutes an important opportunity to call for a **coherent, fair and accountable EU Food Policy** to bring together the various sectoral policies that affect food production, processing, distribution, and consumption, and refocusing all actions on the transition to sustainability. The EU must start by establishing EU-wide, national and local **food policy councils** to strengthen the reterritorialization of food systems involving the entire food chain and ensuring a fair governance.
- Fulfilling the F2F strategy, EU policies need to support building of **local and territorial markets for agroecology**, designing **infrastructure** – including slaughterhouses, and other food processing infrastructures – marketing strategies and importantly public procurement that connects smallholder markets. **All strategies and infrastructures should give priority to and need to take into consideration the needs of women farmers.**
- In addition, the EU should produce a **dedicated action plan towards ensuring fresh, local and healthy food is made available to all citizens**, with particular attention being paid to the rights of socially or economically disadvantaged vulnerable citizens. Member states should pay specific attention to the transformation of food systems to **promote healthy diets that are sustainably produced, have low environmental impacts and are socio-culturally acceptable and economically accessible for all.**
- The CAP and other relevant policies must be subject to **transparent and open decision-making processes** that explicitly seek the **participation of farmers, agricultural workers, fisher people, pastoralists and other food producers** that support agroecology. An **adequate system of governance** must be applied to diverse and different level food systems, promoting genuine food democracy and food justice.
- As part of the effort to fulfil the objectives of the CAP, the EU should promote and support **training in agroecological knowledge** and establish mechanisms to train farmers on using more sustainable and resilient practices, fostering farmer-to-farmer knowledge sharing, intergenerational, and experiential learning processes adapted to local conditions as well as prepare advisory services to support farmers within the agroecological transition.
- **EU internal market regulations, investment treaties and trade agreements** must be reviewed to adapt them to the current climate crisis and make sure they do not harm local food producers but rather guarantee their products are bought at a fair price that enables them to make a living. Trade regulations must strengthen **short supply chains that retain value for farmers and farm workers** in both Europe and in non-European countries in order to be conducive to **transition towards agroecological food systems.**
- Through reshaping its trade regulations, the EU should also adopt a **land directive** to implement **fair, democratic and sustainable land policies** and combat the economic, ecological and climate crises. This would enable the numerous new agroecological farmers to access land on their territory.

- The rejection of the pesticide regulation by the European Parliament makes the F2F strategy targets of reducing the use of pesticides in the EU by 50 per cent until 2030 unattainable. We call on the EU to adopt a strong **EU Regulation for the Sustainable Use of Pesticides** and to **phase out the routine use of chemical inputs including chemical fertilizers**. Realistically, phasing out such products is only possible via a **solid transition plan** elaborated together with farmers. This must include **area-based animal farming** ensuring herds are not exceeding the carrying capacity of land in terms of fodders and ensuring it can provide natural fertilizer to other farms without animal farming.
- The EU should **shift away from biotechnology** as a measure to increase sustainability and exclude it from the F2F strategy. The proposal put forward by the EU Commission to deregulate new genetic engineering processes must also be rejected. The cultivation of genetically modified, patent-protected crops drives farmers into dependency of large genetic engineering companies to whom they have to pay licence fees. **Genetic engineering must continue to be thoroughly regulated in accordance with the EU Genetic Engineering Act and in line with the precautionary principle**. The relation between these technologies and the interests and control by corporations should be assessed.
- The EU should develop **strong legislation** to ensure products traded on the EU market such as soy, palm oil, rubber, maize, beef, leather, coffee and cocoa are **free from deforestation and human rights violations**. Companies must exercise due diligence such as risk assessment and ensure ongoing obligations of monitoring and duty of vigilance. Therefore, a strong *EU Corporate Sustainability Due Diligence Directive* and *EU Regulation on deforestation-free supply chains* must be implemented and defended against any dilution by the industry.
- The EU should ensure that international panels discussing food and agriculture take up the **UN Committee on World Food Security (CFS) policy decisions and recommendations** (*CFS policy recommendations on Agroecological and Other Innovative Approaches*) and apply the *CFS principles of inclusiveness*.
- Policy measures and initiatives implementing agroecology already prove the **potential of building local and resilient food systems**, contributing to **food sovereignty**. Best practices can be found in the Global South, where agroecology has a long tradition. When formulating policies to implement agroecology, the EU should conduct **stakeholder consultations with practitioners and scientists from the Global South** in order to draw on existing knowledge and experiences.
- In order to ensure equitable water sharing and encourage water-efficient agricultural practices, the EU must set up an **assessment of best practice in water management** in Europe as soon as possible, followed by a **democratic definition of priorities for water use and allocation**. All stakeholders who use water should be involved, but care should be taken that the common interest prevails over private interest and profit. The EU must act to stop the capture of water by the most powerful actors. Crops and agricultural practices that require less water and those that are essential for a healthy diet, such as fruit and vegetables, should be encouraged.

CAP-REFORM IN 2027

For the future CAP the principles of agroecology should represent the binding reference.

- According to its objective of ensuring the sustainability of agriculture in the EU, the future CAP reform should **dedicate its whole budget for the preservation of environmental services, mitigation of climate change and building socially and globally just agricultural food systems** applying the principle “public money for public goods.”
- **Agricultural subsidies** must be better distributed to benefit small and medium-sized farms and to encourage **more sustainable agricultural practices**. To do so the following measures should be established:
 - **Capping annual direct payments** at €60.000 per beneficiary until the system of untargeted area-based payments is completely changed, with compulsory redistribution of subsidies for smaller producers.
 - Giving **targeted support for young farmers and new entrants engaging in small-scale agroecology**, including a monthly allowance to allow progress towards a decent income.
 - Providing **incentives for sustainable livestock models and local sustainable feed production**, whilst avoiding simply transplanting industrial soybean production into Europe.
- Introducing a **direct payment measure for producers primarily supplying the European market**.
- A more targeted approach of the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD) and **mandatory funding for urban-rural cooperation to develop short supply chains**. This includes the provision of funding for the infrastructure required to develop short supply chains, such as local storage, processing, and marketing facilities.
- Creating a tenth overall CAP objective on encouraging the **development of sustainable family farming in countries of the Global South**, and at the very least avoiding harm to local producers, as put forward by the Committee of the Regions.
- **Orienting farm advisory services towards a small-scale agroecological transition**, which would include farmer-to-farmer exchange programs. Supporting research and innovation that is embedded within agroecological and food sovereign systems and builds upon the many low-tech grassroots innovations already in existence.
- Ensuring that **CAP funds from Pillar 2 are not diverted to private insurance firms** under risk management measures by creating a clear **active farmer definition** that includes small-scale producers and excludes speculative investors and prevents the financialization of arable land.
- Implementing **import protection measures** to ensure that environmental and health standards match those adhered to by EU producers. **Prioritizing market regulations such as flexible supply management to prevent and address crises**, ensure decent prices, and stabilize income for small and medium-scale producers.
- Put in place a **strategy for a transition away from large-scale animal husbandry** and territorial plans to balance the number of livestock herds with the available land and needs for fodder. The EU should aim to limit how many animals livestock farmers can rear in order to benefit from subsidies. Fodder should ultimately be produced locally and pasture grazing should be favored.

CONTACT: Merle Kampeter,
Advisor on Sustainable
Agrarian Supply Chains,
Romero Initiative (CIR)
kampeter@ci-romero.de

Mireille Remesch,
Advisor on
Agricultural Policies,
Agrar Koordination
mireille.remesch@agrarkoordination.de



Website: www.ci-romero.de

The following organizations support our demands:



OUR FOOD
OUR FUTURE
WE ARE HUNGRY FOR JUSTICE

Author: Mireille Remesch, Agrar Koordination, Forum für Internationale Agrarpolitik e.V.

Contracting authority and editing: Merle Kampeter (Vi.S.d.P.), Anne Sträßler, Dominik Groß, Sarah Lethmate (all CIR)

Copy-Editing: Kim Woods, Singvogel Lektorat, kontakt@singvogel-lektorat.de

Layout: Marco Fischer, grafischer.com

The author would like to thank Südwind Austria and the European Coordination of Via Campesina (ECVC) for their respective valuable contributions and support of the present policy paper.

January 2024

With kind support from



Co-funded by
the European
Union

This publication has been produced with financial support by the European Union and the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ). The contents of this document are the sole responsibility of the author and Christliche Initiative Romero e.V. and in no way reflect the views of the European Union or the BMZ.