



## A Coalition for Food Systems Transformation through Agroecology

### The opportunity

Current agricultural and food systems are not sustainable. They are responsible for one third of global GHG emissions, alarming biodiversity loss, environmental pollution, degradation of land and water resources and increasing social inequities while still not providing food security and adequate nutrition for all. As stated in many recent major reports from IPCC, IPBES, HLPE and others, there is a need for a profound transformation of agricultural and food systems. Incremental steps to improve the efficiency of the dominant green revolution approach, although necessary, are not sufficient to address the climate, environmental, human health and social challenges we face today

This profound transformation is urgently needed to meet the SDGs, to deliver on the Paris Climate Agreement, and to reach the post-2020 CBD and UNCCD targets. This requires agricultural and food systems to be fundamentally redesigned in a way that: builds resilience through diversity (*working with nature not against it*); maximizes biodiversity and ecosystem services; harnesses the knowledge of food producers and nurtures local cultures; and involves communities in the governance of land and natural resources (a people-centric approach). Through this paradigm shift, all actors in food systems, including workers, producers and consumers, with a particular attention to women, youth and the most vulnerable, have agency in determining the future of their food systems.

Such an ambitious food system transformation will require the inclusion and collaboration of different stakeholders to be successful. It is therefore important to form a coalition of the willing on agroecology among countries and organizations that share this ambition. Countries and public and private organizations are invited to:

- Step up and express their commitment to join the coalition as an active member
- Align policies to be supportive of transformation of food systems through agroecological and regenerative agriculture approaches guided by the 13 principles
- Redirect and increase investments toward transformation of food systems through agroecological and regenerative agriculture approaches guided by the 13 principles.

The coalition is a tone-setter for the Summit as it addresses the objectives of all five Action Tracks of the UNFSS. It responds to the call to action of the G20 Matera declaration on food security, nutrition and food systems promoting more integrated farming systems, climate sensitive, agroecological and other innovative approaches. It also responds to the call ([EN](#) | [FR](#) | [ES](#)) expressed by over 1200 countries, organizations, NGOs, farming groups and experts (see the list of [signatories](#)) for a unifying framework for food systems transformation.

### Why a Coalition of Action?

Based on practical experience and evidence, the coalition supports agroecological and regenerative agriculture approaches, as a key lever to transform food systems. It is guided by the 13 principles of agroecology set out in the HLPE (2019) report, which embrace the 10 Elements of Agroecology adopted by FAO, and give specific guidance for decisions and action. The application of these principles globally, supporting local innovation, has the potential to make a major contribution to achieving the SDGs in a holistic, integrated way (Annex 1).

### What are the Coalition's Actions?

A paradigm shift, the move to agroecology steps away from the model of improving food systems based primarily on maximizing productivity of a few major staples, grown predominantly as monocultures alongside intensive livestock systems, that create costly environmental, health and social externalities; towards healthy, resilient, equitable and sustainable food systems. The application of the 13 principles simultaneously takes local innovation to scale, generating concrete, contextualized solutions that tackle real world problems, harnessing all compatible technologies and stimulating development of new innovations (not only at the farm level, but at the entire food system level) and are applicable in, and adaptable to all geographies and at all scales.

Engaging in ambitious implementation of the CFS policy recommendations on agroecological and other innovative approaches adopted at CFS48 will involve countries and organizations coming together to simultaneously un-lock policy, market, capacity, financial and institutional constraints including market

failures, reconfigure research and development to support local innovation at scale, through transdisciplinary, participatory research and co-innovation between scientists, farmers, indigenous peoples and local communities and other actors within food systems. It will also involve developing and deploying holistic metrics of agricultural and food system performance to track and guide transformation.

Critically important is repurposing and fostering a step change in investment by both the public and private sector, stimulating the innovation necessary to support transformative change and the capacity development to sustain it, and de-risk new investments in agroecology. Concrete efforts will be made to address the missing middle between national and international commitments (UNFCCC, UNCCD, CBD, AFR100) and their implementation on the ground. This involves practical measures to integrate policies across sectors - such as agriculture, forestry, fisheries, environment, water, energy, health and trade; and move towards integrated food policies. It will also involve integration across scales - particularly creating policy instruments and social capital at local landscape or territorial scales where many ecosystem services first manifest and trade-offs and synergies amongst them can be managed.

Scaling will be achieved by matching transition pathways to the existing conditions and contexts, from agroecological approaches to increase production in much of sub-Saharan Africa where few inputs are used, to redesign in much of Asia, the Americas and Europe to substitute the use of environmentally disruptive chemicals on monocultures with more biodiverse production systems that recycle and make full use of natural processes of pest and disease control, biological nitrogen fixation and nutrient cycling.

**What do Commitments look like and who will track them?**

#### **What underpins the coalition?**

Agroecological and regenerative agriculture approaches, including regenerative grazing, work with rather than against nature. They mainstream biodiversity, protect and restore critical ecosystem

services and harness the full potential of natural processes, closing nutrient cycles, maintaining soil health and water retention, controlling pests and diseases, and enabling reduction in synthetic inputs, irrigation and threats to ecosystem function. They improve soil health and have the capacity to restore degraded land and thereby prevent the need for further deforestation and conversion of natural ecosystems.

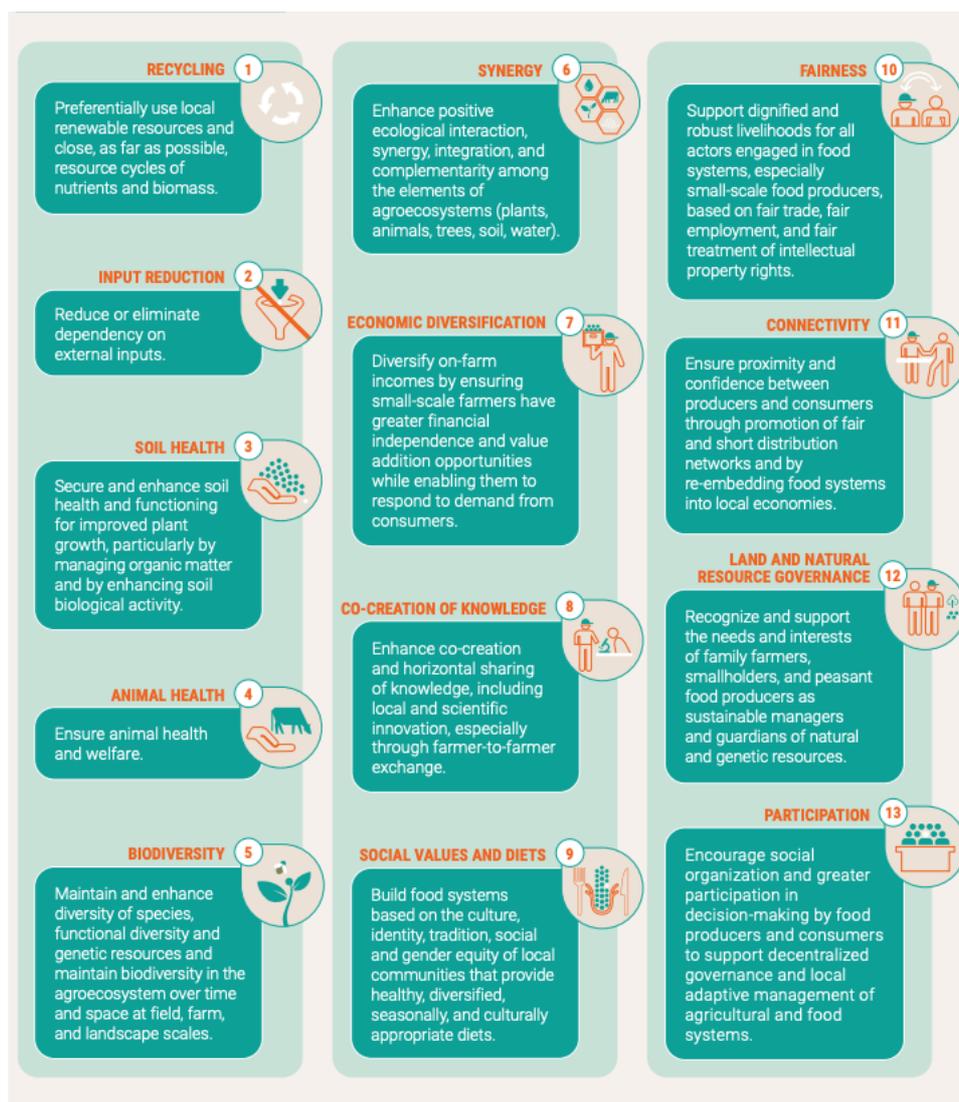
With greater focus on enabling policies, these approaches can deliver simultaneously in terms of higher incomes and decent work; more diverse, healthy diets; a healthier environment; an increased carbon sink; and more resilient and sustainable food systems in which producers and consumers are empowered and better connected to one another.

These approaches are knowledge and labour intensive rather than capital intensive. They require innovation and involve co-creation and sharing of knowledge amongst producers, other actors along value chains and scientists, through inclusive transdisciplinary research and development. They also require building social capital of farmers' and community based organizations to empower them as actors of food system transformation. They are linked to markets through value chains that realize added value of agroecologically produced food, as evident with organic certification and can be strengthened and protected by financial services, changes in the focus of agricultural incentives and insurance solutions. They support the creation of dignified work in rural areas, providing attractive jobs and higher income and empowerment of women, young people and indigenous and traditional communities.

#### **Building on multiple foundations**

There are many examples demonstrating the potential of agroecological approaches to address multiple challenges faced by our food systems today, despite very little investment in them so far. Below, are a few that aim to implement the agroecological paradigm shift by adopting different concrete changes in function of the local realities and processes. They represent a solid basis upon which to build and from which to learn in the context of this coalition. Several examples of current work are attached as Annex 2.

## Annex 1. The 13 HLPE (2019) agroecological principles



## Annex2. Examples of Ongoing work in Agroecology

Many farmer organizations have developed strategies for agroecological transitions and civil society organizations have engaged in efforts to support agroecological transformation and to advocate for support for it. In West Africa, ECOWAS is implementing a major agroecology programme and is supporting the Alliance for Agroecology in West Africa (3AO) that brings together over 70 farmers', civil society and research organizations collaborating on the scaling-up of agroecology in the region. The Alliance for Food Sovereignty in Africa (AFSA) with over 30 member organizations is advocating for a transition to agroecology in Africa. The African Union introduced the Ecological Organic Agriculture Initiative in nine countries.

The Asian Farmers' Association for Sustainable Rural Development with 22 member organizations in 16 countries is promoting agroecology through capacity building, knowledge exchanges and support to on-ground work with men, women and young people in farms, fisheries and forested landscapes. The Andhra Pradesh Community-managed Natural Farming programme that has over 700,000 farmers practicing agroecology with improved incomes and resilience. The Indian State of Sikkim is practicing 100% organic farming and Sri Lanka has enacted a policy to embrace agroecology and banned the importation of synthetic fertilizers and pesticides.

Extensive agroecological transitions in France, Austria and Switzerland have been driven by shifts in national policies. The Green Deal and the European Commission's Farm to Fork strategy and Biodiversity Strategy create a supportive environment for and agroecological transformation.

The rapid expansion of the organic food market reflects the increasing demand for healthy, sustainably and ethically produced food, and creates the necessary market for agroecological and regenerative agriculture products.

The Great Green Wall Accelerator (GGW-A) is applying agroecological principles in 11 Sahel States to restore, by 2030, 250 million hectares of degraded land, stop desertification through farmer-managed natural regeneration, capture 250 million tons of carbon and create 10 million jobs. Thus, it contributes to improving food security and nutrition, ecosystems protection and restoration, agricultural productivity, resilience to economic shocks and climate change, soil carbon storage and to reducing migration pressure by creating economic opportunities for populations in rural areas. The GGW-A is supported by the Secretariat of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD), in close cooperation with the Pan Africa Agency for the Great Green Wall (PAAGGW) and in partnership with a number of major international donors and organizations.

WFP, in partnership with more than 300 national and international NGOs, national and local governments, is supporting regenerative agriculture by promoting agroecological practices through community-led Food Assistance for Assets initiatives across 50 countries.

The Latin American Scientific Society of Agroecology (SOCLA) promotes the development of the science of agroecology as the scientific basis of a sustainable rural development strategy in Latin America. Regeneration International educates different stakeholders on the benefits of regenerative agriculture and promotes policy initiatives to advance the transition to regenerative farming. Agroecology Europe promotes the transition towards agroecology-based farming and food systems in Europe.

The FAO-lead 'Scaling-up agroecology initiative' brings together UN and other organizations to accelerate agroecological transformation and focuses on three interrelated areas of work: Knowledge and innovation; Policy processes and Building connections.

The 4per1000 initiative promotes agroecological and regenerative agriculture approaches at the international and global levels to increase soil carbon content by 0.4% per year and thereby contributing to climate mitigation and adaptation.

Many examples of intensively managed grazing or regenerative grazing initiatives in different parts of the world have demonstrated their potential to increase soil carbon content, increase productivity and re-greening badly degraded areas.

The Transformative Partnership Platform on agroecology brings together a global coalition of actors to address key knowledge and implementation gaps constraining agroecological transitions. It has a rapidly developing science-policy interface and capacity development facility.

Some initiatives taken by the private sector such as the OP2B coalition are committed to support regenerative agriculture deployment at large scales. An informal donor group, bringing together philanthropic foundations and country donor agencies, has been collaborating on planning increased and more efficient investments in agroecology.

Several other countries have developed policies that support agroecological transformation, including Argentina, Bhutan, Brazil, Cuba, Mexico, Nicaragua, Senegal and Uruguay and many others are in the process of developing them. In Austria, 25% of farming land has already been converted to organic agriculture. All these initiatives constitute a strong basis to build upon through countries and organizations coming together in this ambitious coalition of the willing.