

CSM SUBMISSION ON AGROECOLOGY AND OTHER INNOVATIONS
BASED ON THE RAPPORTEUR'S NOTE PRESENTED ON JANUARY 28, 2020

GENERAL COMMENTS

We would like to convey our deep appreciation for a CFS policy convergence process to reflect on and engage with the critical issue of how our food is produced and how food systems are operated. **As CSM, we have already shared our appreciation of the HLPE report on “Agroecology and other innovative approaches” as a good first step of this discussion, as we believe it has presented Agroecology quite strongly and accurately, strongly anchored to the conceptualization of agroecology made by social movements in the Nyéléni process, and reaffirming that it has the power and potential for this transformation of our food systems.** Social movements of small-scale farmers, pastoralists, artisanal fisher folk and indigenous peoples have been practicing agroecology for a long time and as CSM, we have been the strongest advocates for the CFS to take on an agroecology workstream. We reaffirm our commitment to engage comprehensively, and with the full scope of our diverse constituencies, with this policy convergence process.

We’d like to emphasize the importance of building and anchoring this process to the work already done by FAO on agroecology, in particular the 10 elements of Agroecology agreed and adopted by the FAO Conference. It is also fundamental to set such actions within the framework of the UN Decade of Family Farming, the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP), the UN Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and the UN Declaration on the Rights of Peasants and Other People Working in Rural Areas adopted by the UN General Assembly (UNDROP).

As CSM, we reaffirm that Agroecology is a truly transformational pathway to address all the structural changes needed in our food system in a systemic and integrated way. The extensive analysis made by the HLPE report has shown that too. Agroecology has catalyzed the agency of those most affected by insecurity and marginalization to become the architects and drivers of socio-economic justice in their food systems. **Agroecology has the capacity to pursue many critical public objectives, and for this reason the policy recommendations should clearly shed light on public policies, investments and incentives that can strengthen and promote the shift to agroecology, building on the millions of agroecological smallholders to drive the transformations that are necessary to find new sustainable pathways for our societies and economies.** We expect this policy convergence process to recognize the way movements have shaped¹ agroecology as a result of their struggles to obtain the adequate policy and funding support for it. **Despite Agroecology not being the only option, we need more agroecology to address the multiple crisis we are facing and for this we need to address and remove the barriers to its expansion.**

With regard to other innovations, we need to **put in place effective and inclusive performance metrics that can assess the different existing innovations from the human rights perspective, and the social,**

¹ Declaration of the International Forum for Agroecology. Nyéléni, Mali (2015)
<https://www.foodsovereignty.org/forum-agroecology-nyeleni-2015-2/>

economic, cultural, environmental and public health dimensions. The introduction of the ecological footprint and the true cost accounting in the metrics is a good step forward.

Finally, we would like to reaffirm the historical opportunity and call for the strengthening of the obvious synergy between this policy convergence process and the one on Food Systems and Nutrition, both to be concluded by 2020.

STRUCTURE AND RECOMMENDATIONS

PREAMBLE

In terms of the structure, **we propose to reframe recommendation 1 as a chapeau to the actual recommendations** that spells out the main principles that should guide the transition to diversified and resilient food systems. The chapeau should anchor the policy recommendations to the 10 elements of agroecology adopted by FAO. The current recommendation 1 already states that the transformation in the food system builds on the context specific priorities and needs, the ecological footprint, and co-production of knowledge. In addition to them, we propose to add the principle of equity, the agency, and the human rights framework with its implications on how to ensure democratic governance. These principles are addressed by the HLPE report, and we suggest grouping them under a chapeau as guiding principle for the transformation we need in the food system.

The preamble will then be followed by four recommendations that reflect the current recommendations 2 to 5, as follows:

RECOMMENDATION 1 – FOSTER THE TRANSFORMATION OF FOOD SYSTEMS THROUGH INTEGRATION OF AGROECOLOGICAL AND OTHER INNOVATIVE APPROACHES TO SUPPORT TRANSITIONS TO DIVERSIFIED AND RESILIENT SYSTEMS

Agroecology embraces a multidimensional understanding of food and food systems. It offers a food systems' approach that reconnects agriculture with ecology, economy, society, health and culture through a human rights' framework. Agroecology must be recognized for its potential to transform social relations and traditional sexual division of labor, by promoting practices that are accessible to women and increase their access to resources and their decision-making power at all levels, but also by enhancing the Youth's participatory and inclusive engagement, leadership and self-determination.

- **We strongly recommend keeping the point (a) under a different title that reads as “public incentives”.** In order to support a transition to diversified food systems, it is paramount to tackle with the current massive support to conventional agriculture through subsidies and other forms of incentives. These incentives should be re-directed to agroecological farmers that need support to access credit and means to continue or to move to agroecological production. This contributes to the public health through access to fresh, nutritious, locally produced food such as fruit, vegetables and legumes, and strengthens the link between producers and consumers that can easily access to healthy food.
- We propose to **combine point (d), (g), under the headline of territorial approach** that should be enhanced. The territorial approach applies to the governance of the landscapes by ensuring the equal distribution of land that takes into account the right to secure access and control over natural resources by small scale food producers. The same approach should apply to markets with

the emphasis on territorial markets and short-circuit of commercialization with adequate infrastructure to enable agroecological farmers to sell their produce.

- We propose to **reframe point (f) to focus on soil regeneration** with the use and promotion of complex and resilient agroecosystems that, by *“assembling crops, animals, trees, soils and other factors in spatially and temporally diversified schemes, favor natural processes and biological interactions that optimize synergies so that diversified farms are able to sponsor their own soil fertility, crop protection and productivity with small scale livestock”*². Policies should incentivize these systems and gradually phase out the use of agrochemicals that affect negatively soil and human health. We also recommend to not use the terminology “neutral” scientific research, and rather focus on public led scientific research.
- **Under point (e), we recommend removing the reference to intellectual property rights** and to emphasize the right of small-scale food producers to save, use and exchange their own seeds as stated by The International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (ITPGRFA)
- We propose to **remove from point (h) the reference to nutrient-dense foods** and rather focus on linking healthy diets to more diversified food systems and food production diversification as stated in point a.
- **Point (i) should address the issue of power concentration in the current food system** which spans from market concentration in the retail sector with the abuse of market power and monopoly, to financial concentration in private led research and concentration in knowledge production and control. Conflict of interest must be addressed, and appropriate regulations developed.
 - We propose to remove here the reference to digital technology and move it under recommendation 5 under the area we’ll propose around “digitalization”. In the same area we propose to not qualify young people as entrepreneurs as this is a very narrow focus compared to the wide range of employment opportunities the youth might prefer, including very innovative way of getting livelihood from farming. This should be supported with re-dignifying work in rural areas.
 - We also propose to emphasize public procurement schemes that can promote inclusive and responsible contracts for communities, cooperatives and producers’ associations, creating at the same time opportunities to supply healthy food where it’s most needed such as in school canteens, day-care centers, lodges, hospitals.

RECOMMENDATION 2 – STRENGTHEN SUPPORT FOR RESEARCH AND RECONFIGURE KNOWLEDGE GENERATION AND SHARING TO FOSTER CO-LEARNING

Agroecology springs from a combination of smallholders’ knowledge and co-innovations, both ancestral and modern over millennia. This existent knowledge by communities, peasants, indigenous peoples, women and youth should be accepted, preserved, supported, promoted and protected.

- We propose to strengthen the **central role of small-scale food producers in the co-creation of knowledge**

² HLPE. 2019. Agroecological and other innovative approaches for sustainable agriculture and food systems that enhance food security and nutrition. A report by the High-Level Panel of Experts on Food Security and Nutrition of the Committee on World Food Security, Rome.

- We propose to address the need to introduce **adequate safeguards to protect public space from conflicts of interest**, including with respect to data collection and ownership, by addressing the issue of the governance of knowledge in order to prevent misappropriation.
- Under point (d), we propose to remove the concept of “transfer” of knowledge and focus more on the **co-creation of knowledge** as a process where farmers prioritize horizontal and peer to peer education and learning systems.
- We recommend introducing an area **focusing on the role and priorities of youth in education and Training**. Public research and training for development should be reoriented to build on the agency of Youth peasants and respond to their needs (training in transition practices and agroecological production between peasants and rural extension technicians).
 - To promote, generate and provide access to ground-up, grassroots, community-based and diversified educational, training and capacity building initiatives for Youth enhancing participatory and inclusive engagement, leadership and self-determination. Integrate concrete examples from our territories and lessons learned from the practices of Agroecology and Food sovereignty to share important experiences of local economies.
- **Public policies should promote participatory research schemes** given the key role that small-scale food producers play in research and development.
- Recommendations here should address the current unbalance between the public and the private led research and promote policies that redress this unbalance by promoting investment in participatory public led research, where farmers can set their priorities.

RECOMMENDATION 3 - STRENGTHEN AGENCY AND STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT, EMPOWER VULNERABLE AND MARGINALIZED GROUPS AND ADDRESS POWER INEQUALITIES IN FOOD SYSTEMS

We’d like to strengthen that the central agency in transforming our food systems come from small-scale food producers and indigenous peoples and their organizations. They are the agents of agroecology and their own development and should not be referred to in pietistic terms such as vulnerable population. Based on a human rights approach, we must differentiate between rights-holders versus stakeholders and promote the agency of the main contributors/ actors to the food system which are small scale food producers, including women and youth.

- **We propose to remove point (b) and to address the issue of land under recommendation 2.** It doesn’t fit here, but more than that it has a very narrow focus on tenure without considering the broader issue of secure access and control over land and other natural resources. In addition to that, landless, Indigenous peoples and pastoralists are not mentioned here and the reference to just customary access might be highly problematic in some contexts where women are discriminated by social norms.
- **We appreciate the inclusion of the gender perspective, the recognition of the centrality of women’s rights and gender equality and of the role of women in knowledge accumulation.** However, women’s roles, responsibilities and practical and strategic needs in practising agroecology should be highlighted. In this sense, the gender transformative policies mentioned in the document should relate to female autonomy and self-determination, and the construction of spaces of equal participation between men and women by incorporating respect, care, solidarity, shared responsibility, by ensuring equal income and shared power, and by putting an end to

gender violence and sexism. They should also relate to equal access to territories (land, water, forests, fishing, foraging, hunting) and public services.

- We propose to remove the reference to digital technology in farmers' networks, and to address it under recommendation 5 on the issue of digitalization. It is by the way paramount to assume the **right to self-determination of peasants in deciding which technologies to use and how to use them.**

RECOMMENDATION 5 – ESTABLISH AND USE COMPREHENSIVE PERFORMANCE MEASUREMENT AND MONITORING FRAMEWORKS FOR FOOD SYSTEMS

We believe that all processes towards defining other innovative approaches which could truly transform our pathways towards sustainable food systems, must be accompanied by technology assessment mechanisms on new innovations in terms of ecological footprint, achievement of agency and economic impact.

- **Under point (a), we propose to strengthen the multidimensionality of any performance evaluation metric/criteria.** The economic assessment based on yield productivity is not enough, as well as just the mitigation potential effect of some approaches. The multidimensional assessment must embed human rights, as well as the social, the environmental, the public health objectives, and consumers preferences.
- We propose **to address the issue of governance of the performance evaluation metrics/criteria.** Policy recommendations should address the issue of who develops the metrics/criteria and who decides how to use it. This must be addressed before linking any outcome of the evaluation to policy formulation.
- We propose to introduce **a new area focusing on digitalization** and the need to assess it. Digitalization has multiple benefits for smallholders but may and by the fact already favors increased power concentration. The issue of how to collect, use and control the data generated should be addressed in a way that ensure public ownership of data, and promote and respect the sovereignty of smallholders to define which technology they want to use and how.
- We propose to move point e (employment and labor) under the chapeau as a guiding principle to guide the transformation towards diversified and resilient food systems.
- We propose to move the item of “food product certification” under recommendation 1 as a mean to strengthen links between producers and consumers.