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NOTE

From: General Secretariat of the Council
To: Delegations

Subject: Regional Symposium on Agroecology for Sustainable Agriculture and Food Systems in Europe and Central Asia (Budapest, 23-25 November 2016)
- Information from the Hungarian delegation

Delegations will find in Annex an information note received from the Hungarian delegation on the above mentioned subject to be dealt with under "Any other business" at the meeting of the Council ("Agriculture and Fisheries") on 12-13 December 2016.

Regional Symposium on Agroecology for Sustainable Agriculture and Food Systems in Europe and Central Asia

(Budapest, 23-25 November 2016)

The *Regional Symposium on Agroecology for Sustainable Agriculture and Food Systems in Europe and Central Asia* was held on 23-25 November in Budapest in the Ministry of Agriculture of Hungary. The event was co-organized by FAO and Hungary and was financed with the support of the French Government.

The event received great interest; over 180 participants were present from 41 countries. The Symposium had a multi-stakeholder setting: representatives of governments, academia and research organisations, civil society organisations, private sector, and farmers themselves participated at the meeting. The event started with a high level opening session including the participation of the Director-General of the FAO, the Minister of Agriculture of Hungary and the representative of the European Commission.

The aim of the meeting was to facilitate the exchange of knowledge and experiences among different stakeholders on the potential contribution of agroecology to sustainable agriculture, to identify potential entry points and areas of contribution of agroecology in public policies and to showcase existing best practices in the region and to foster international cooperation.¹ According to FAO's approach, agroecology is based on applying ecological concepts and principles to optimize 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. By building synergies, agroecology can support food production and food security and nutrition while restoring the ecosystem services and biodiversity that are essential for sustainable agriculture.

The outcomes of the Symposium were summarized in a closing document attached to this summary. It includes 37 recommendations grouped according to the following themes:

- I) Agroecology and sustainable food systems
- II) Agroecology and natural resources in a changing climate: water, land, biodiversity and territories

¹ <http://www.fao.org/agroecology/en/>

III) Research, innovation, knowledge sharing and agroecological movements

IV) Public policies to develop agroecology and promote transition

The final report of the meeting will be published early spring next year.

**Regional Symposium on Agroecology for Sustainable Agriculture and Food
Systems in Europe and Central Asia**

23-25 November 2016 - Budapest

RECOMMENDATIONS

I) Agroecology and sustainable food systems

1. Extend the dialog between health, nutrition, ecology, trade and agriculture actors to support the development of agroecological sustainable and healthy food systems.
2. Facilitate a shift from linear food systems to circular ones that mimic natural cycles and reduce carbon and ecological footprints of food and agriculture, - ensuring that circular systems are designed to replace specialised and centralised supply chains with resilient and decentralised webs of food and energy systems that are integrated with sustainable water and waste management systems.
3. Agroecology principles should be formulated and used as the principle guideline to transform and improve the current food system, be based on participation, alliances and put food producers at the center.
4. Develop specific policies and programs to enhance public procurement based on short and local supply chain principles that provide fresh, nutritious, affordable food, which is produced in a sustainable manner and builds local and regional economies.
5. Develop public and long term financial measures, training and knowledge exchange in improving short supply chains which favour small-scale producers, such as direct marketing and value adding, peasant markets, micro-dairy, Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) initiatives and Participatory Guarantee System (PGS), give financial and infrastructure support for collective local food processing units and support sanitary rules for proximity markets which are adapted to the conditions of local markets.
6. Implement the policy recommendations on ‘Connecting smallholders to markets’ recently negotiated in the Committee on World Food Security at national level.

II) Agroecology and natural resources in a changing climate: water, land, biodiversity and territories

7. Promote policies, practices, research and awareness creation material to achieve the transformative potential of agroecology to address the urgency of adapting, mitigating and reversing climate change.
8. Contribute to the agroecological transition through territorial approaches and organize pilot farm network acting according to the principles and methods of agroecology and sharing their practices and techniques.
9. Ensure, recognize, respect and uphold small-scale food producers, family farmers and communities', in particular women's, youths' and indigenous and nomadic peoples', rights to land, water, seeds, inland and coastal waters, forests, commons, biodiversity and territory, also promoting the implementation of the Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land, Fisheries and Forests (VGGT) and the Voluntary Guidelines for Securing Sustainable Small-scale fisheries (VGSSF) and Farmers' Rights as stated in the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (ITPGRFA).
10. Close collaborate with the Commission on Genetic Resources and seek synergies with other relevant processes like Convention on Biodiversity
11. Develop national and regional plans for agroecological pathways to sustainable food systems and natural resource management that support the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the UNFCCC Paris Agreement.
12. Support the participative development of adequate criteria for assessing and valuing agroecological systems and sustainable food systems, and promote their widespread sharing among all actors.
13. Facilitate the development and implementation of agroecological practices also for aquaculture and fish pond systems based on agroecological principles and study options for better integrating aquaculture, pastoralism, livestock and crop systems within territories in order to recycle resources.
14. FAO should reinforce its processes to prioritize agroecology and strengthen its partnerships in the framework of its Strategic Framework and implement the recommendations from the Committee of Agriculture (COAG) and regional conferences and enhances activities especially linked to Climate Change and Biodiversity.

III) Research, innovation, knowledge sharing and agroecological movements

15. Knowledge transmission requires redesign educational programs to integrate agroecology in the curriculum of non-formal and formal education (in primary and higher education), following the principles of the Global Action Programme (GAP) on Education for Sustainable Development (ESD).
16. Support knowledge exchange in particular horizontal exchange between food producers (farmer to farmer and Farmer Field Schools (FFS) methods), adapting advisory services and extension services to agroecology with specific attention to climate change adaptation and mitigation.
17. Recognise, value, support and document ancestral knowledge and modern innovations, traditions, pastoralists and peasants' local wisdom. Include participatory action research, the co-production of oral and written knowledge and cultural practices that addresses the true needs of communities, and particularly considers the needs of women, indigenous peoples, vulnerable groups, and youth. Ensure that innovations and the products of research remain in the public and collective domains according to Article 9 in the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (ITPGRFA).
18. Develop mechanisms and bridges among different agroecology knowledge platforms and websites including the European Innovation Partnership Network and FAO.
19. Promote and support agroecological practices that reduce external inputs – specifically seeds, fertilizers, pesticides, animal feed and, fossil fuels enhancing the capacity of soil and agroecosystem health to close cycles and maintain productivity, stability and resilience.
20. Document impacts of agroecology on farm income, productivity and livelihoods of farmers and develop better data on the evidence base on externalities like social and environmental costs and benefits of agroecological systems, possibly including collaboration with the True Cost Accounting work.
21. Create awareness material on the concept of innovation to include conceptual, methodological, social and institutional in addition to technical innovations.
22. Strengthen public research: allocate more funds for public research in this field, favour interdisciplinary research better connecting agricultural, ecological and social sciences. Facilitate changes in research organisations (incentives and rewards, ways of working and the training of scientists and professionals) and enable farmers and citizens participation in research including in their community and in governance of research: setting upstream research priorities, the allocation of funds, participation in production of knowledge and in risk assessments.

23. Strengthen self managed research: strengthen farmers and extension services networks for research and horizontal spread of agricultural innovations, strengthen the capacity of farmers and citizens to facilitate transdisciplinary innovations that bridge different knowledge systems and give farmers and citizens enough material security and paid time to engage in and participate in the whole research cycle, including in the evaluation of research programs and institutes.
24. Organic agriculture is largely rooted in agroecological approaches, both in principles and actual practices, and most of the organic farmers respond to an ecological mission as part of their social undertaking. We recommend that Agroecology and organic farming are considered in their synergies and co-evolution.
25. Participatory research and knowledge sharing require openness in the exchange of data. Preserving the public nature of knowledge and environmental data is required for the development of agroecology.
26. Develop nutrition sensitive interventions and for example design legume inclusive diversification of food and fodder cropping systems based on agroecological principles and practices to improve soil health as an agroecological contribution to Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), especially to number 1, 2, 15 and 17.
27. Recognize and strengthen farmer seed and livestock systems and reinforce their contributions to agroecology.
28. Promote research on the institutional processes and governance of agroecology.

IV) Public policies to develop agroecology and promote transition

29. Develop scientific and citizen led data supporting the potential of agroecology to create jobs and the need to analyse and systematise the experiences so to measure (quantify and qualify) the social, ecologic and economic implications of agroecology both at the farm scale and for upstream and downstream jobs.
30. Improve and develop a policy and economic framework within agricultural policies that supports and allows farmers to implement agroecological practices and make the transition to agroecological farming systems in the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) and in other food and agricultural related policies and programs throughout the Region. Direct payments should be made dependend upon protecting and enhancing biodiversity.
31. Promote the establishment of Food Policy Councils at local, regional and national level to foster and allow consumers and food producers participation in decision making processes around the food system, markets and trade.
32. Improve knowledge and evidence base for the needed policy, incentives, market regulatory mechanisms, tariffs to create the needed enabling environment to allow the transition to agroecology.

33. FAO should include agroecology in its work done in collaboration with the International Labour Organisation (ILO) to ensure decent rural employment opportunities that ensure a living wage, security in the workplace, access to social protection and respect for fundamental human rights.
 34. Develop and collaborate with international mechanisms recognising collective peasant rights, such as the UN declaration for peasant rights and rural workers.
 35. Enhance the role of agroecology in sensitive regions, specifically in Central Asia, to sustainable management of natural resources in the context of climate change to create awareness among different stakeholders (policy makers, researchers, private sector, farmers, Civil Society Organisations, and individuals).
 36. Promote research in order to better identify, quantify and qualify those policies that disincentivise agroecology. Making sure that True Costing work informs all relevant decisions that impact directly or indirectly agriculture and food systems.
 37. Encourage the region to identify flagship countries piloting agroecology and allowing for the multi stakeholder development of knowledge and the adoption of agroecology principles.
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