

Agroecology as a pathway for smallholder farmers towards climate justice and resilience in Africa

Concept Note for Webinar Series



HOW CAN AGROECOLOGY DELIVER CLIMATE JUSTICE IN AFRICA? A FARMERS PERSPECTIVE

SAVE THE DATE: Friday 26 Nov 2021

1.00 PM - 2.30 PM LONDON TIME
3.00 PM - 4.30 PM JOHANNESBURG TIME
4.00 PM - 5.30 PM NAIROBI TIME

ZOOM WEBINAR

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A virtual roundtable bringing together African smallholder farmers from across the continent and international funders as well as other civil society organisations to learn about mutual perspectives and better understand key debates and practical needs of farmers towards addressing climate justice beyond COP26.

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1. Background

Africa has potential to feed her population by producing varieties of healthy food. The continent has arable land, abundant fresh water, tremendous biodiversity, knowledge and labor to produce different types of food. However, hunger, malnutrition and stunting are in the rise. The report on the State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World of 2021 indicates that **282 million people** in Africa are undernourished which is about 21% of the entire population of Africa. Many African countries are net food importers while 23% and more of Sub-Saharan Africa's GDP comes from agriculture.

Many African governments see agriculture as a growth sector, yet often focus on quick fix of chemical intensive industrial agriculture and attracting (foreign direct) investments for large-scale

commercial monocropping farming enterprises. That increases the risk of land grabbing and diverts resources from the backbone of African agriculture (Small-scale farmers), who make up 60% of the African population and work 80% of Africa's arable land.

Furthermore, the strong focus on green revolution productivity model through external chemical inputs, and large-scale mono-cropping in conventional farming, contributes to water pollution, soil depletion, reduction of biodiversity and land degradation, which is further exacerbate the effects of climate change. According to the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) estimates, nearly three-fourths of land that is vital for agriculture and food production in Africa is already degraded, mainly due to climate change effects and unsustainable land use practices.

In recent years, regenerative forms of agriculture including **agroecology** have gained prominence as a possible pathway, both towards ecosystem restoration and climate resilience but also regarding food security and food sovereignty supported by African movement like AFSA – Alliance for Food Sovereignty in Africa, ESAFF- the Eastern and Southern Africa Small Scale Farmers Forum, ROPPA, PROPAC, African Centre for Biodiversity, PELUM Association, ActionAid International, La Via Campesina, Global Justice Now, BiBa, African Biosafety Network (ABN), Peoples Coalition on Food Sovereignty (PCFS) and many others. In recent discussions within the United Nations Decade on Family Farming (UNFFF), United Nations Food Systems Summit (UNFSS) and the Glasgow COP 26, regenerative agriculture featured prominently as the possible model to avoid future climate crisis.

There has been a great diversity of approaches promoted under the frame of regenerative practices, from climate-smart agriculture to conservation agriculture. These approaches are based on a plethora of different definitions for “regenerative”. Many social movements criticize these approaches running under the frame of regenerative practices as too narrowly focused on offering technical quick fixes, access to inputs and markets, while underlying questions of social justice and rights for small-scale farmers, particularly for indigenous people, women and youths involved in agriculture, of land tenure and food sovereignty, are ignored.

As a reaction to the shortcomings of those rather technical solutions, the concept of agroecology has gained quite some traction - not only with international organizations such as FAO, but also with social movements in Africa, as a promising and more systemic approach to a just and sustainable transformation of agriculture and food systems, that aims not only at food security but at food sovereignty for African communities as well. Many movements and farmer organisations including AFSA endorse and believe in the 10 elements of agroecology by **FAO**¹ and 13 principles of agroecology **HLPE 2019**¹ which both agreed by the regenerative movement as well as the organic agriculture movement. Recent research shows that Nitrogen based fertilizers are much worse for climate crisis than they were previously thought. However, some players in the field, have very different positions on how agroecology should incorporate farming technology and the use of fertilizers and pesticides to increase productivity.

¹ The report suggests a set of 13 agroecological principles: recycling; reducing the use of inputs; soil health; animal health and welfare; biodiversity; synergy; economic diversification; co-creation of knowledge; social values and diets; fairness; connectivity; land and natural resource governance; and participation.

In the middle of this discussion is a vast civil society space of local and regional farmer's associations, women's and indigenous movements that offer a wide range of perspectives on regenerative agriculture, agroecology and food sovereignty in Africa.

This offers many opportunities to facilitate meaningful conversations between key actors from the field as well as with interested donors, to build conceptual bridges, exchange experiences and organize around common goals. The event is planned to culminate to a webinar to be organised on 26th November 2021 after COP 26 in Glasgow, Scotland.

2. Rationale of the webinar – 26th November 2021

This dialogue will bring together African smallholder producers voices from the field on one side, and funders from the Global North, who would like to better understand practical realities, needs and priorities in the field related to climate justice, and explore topics of mutual interest with local actors. The aim is to ensure that strategic priorities of donors are rooted in the lived experience of those on the frontlines, who are best placed to define their needs and ways to take up emergent opportunities.

3. Organizers of the Webinar

The webinar will be organized by the Eastern and Southern Africa Small Scale Farmers Forum (ESAFF) in collaboration with Southern Africa Trust together with the **Climate Justice and Just Transition Donor Collaborative**, a coalition of funders trying to increase philanthropic engagement in intersectional climate action rooted in climate justice and just transition principles. The webinar will be part of a series that brings together funders and practitioners to explore topics of mutual interest and to build shared understandings of the Climate Justice/Just Transition landscape.

The webinar will be preceded by selected representatives of small farmer leader's participation in national consultations towards the UNFCCC and COP 26 in selected countries to appreciate policy processes and share their experience on agroecology farming practices. Women farmers, men, youth and indigenous representatives from eastern, and southern Africa will share their experiences, successes and challenges on agroecology farming.

4. The overall goal of the webinar;

Is to facilitate a dialogue on agroecology as a potentially transformative approach to an equitable and climate resilient agricultural development in western, Eastern, Central and Southern Africa.

5. Specific goals of the webinar;

(i) To learn mutual perspectives and get the opportunity to connect among grassroots actors and different movements.

(ii) To showcase work and convey assessment of needs and gaps in the field, that funder's support could fill at local/regional and international level

(iii) Funders, to have a better understanding of key debates and a diverse range of perspectives on farmer needs, climate change and agroecology practices

6. Participants

- Smallholder farmers from West, central, Eastern and Southern Africa (in their groups and individuals)
- Southern Africa Trust partners
- Members of Rural Women Forum of Southern Africa
- Members of the Climate Justice and Just Transition Donor Collaborative and other interested philanthropic funders.
- Members of the Alliance for Food Sovereignty in Africa
- African Farmer Organizations in Central Africa, West Africa
- African Non-State Actors
- Academia and Researchers
- African Policy makers

7. Key Speakers and Timetable on 26/11/2021

Time: 04:00 - 5:30 PM Nairobi - 03:00 - 4:30 PM Johannesburg-
01:00 PM - 2:30 PM London

Time	Event	Responsible	Remarks
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Overall Moderation –RBSG/ ESAFF / SAT 		
10 Minutes (3 minutes each)	Opening Session 1– Songs from farmers and General Introductions Welcome remarks from ESAFF, CJ-JT Collabo/RBSG?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Hakim B. ESAFF Chair (farmer) ▪ Christa P – SAT ▪ CJ-JT Collabo/RBSG? 	Facilitated by Stella
15 Minutes (5 minutes each)	Section 2 -Setting the scene: Why is agroecology the pathway to climate and social resilience in Africa? (Keynote/short input) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Reflection on the UNFSS and COP 26 ▪ Brief introduction on Agroecology in Africa – ▪ Benefit and opportunities of agroecology in Africa ▪ Challenges facing agroecology ▪ Recommendations moving forward 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Ms Nora Berrahmouni &, Ms Isabel Kuehne, Senior Officers - FAO – Africa ▪ Dr. Million Bellay – AFSA General Coordinator 	Facilitated by Dr. Mutizwa Mukute- TBC
5 Minutes	Q&A		
20 Minutes (each 4 minutes)	Section 3 Opportunities, Challenges and Recommendations on the ground: Farmer's voices (Panel) on agroecology work to promote agroecology, as well as challenges on the ground <i>like lack of supportive policies and finance, land tenure, seed sovereignty, etc. and recommendations to African governments and donors</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Mai Mpofo – Woman farmers (Overall Situation in Africa) ▪ Ms. Mary Sakala – (Woman farmer Zambia (Southern Africa), ▪ Ms. Masudio Margaret -woman farmer- Uganda, Eastern Africa ▪ Mr. Ibrahim Coulibaly- ROPPA (West Africa) - TBC ▪ Mr. Nathanael Buka Mupungu - PROPAC (Central Africa) 	Facilitated by Beatrice Makwenda (NASFAM) - TBC
5 Minutes	Q&A		
	Short Health Break		
10 --5 Minutes	Group Work and presentations on recommendations to Donors and to African Governments		
10 minutes	Closure and Next Steps - Reflection/Summary of recommendations for action/to donors (by CJ-JT)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ by CJ-JT 	Facilitated by Christa

ⁱ FAO (2018d) first described the 10 elements of agroecology which are diversity, co-creation of knowledge, synergies, efficiency, recycling, resilience, human and social values, culture and food traditions, responsible governance, and circular and solidarity economy