



Food and Agriculture
Organization of the
United Nations

CONCEPT NOTE

2nd FAO International Symposium on Agroecology: Scaling Up Agroecology to Achieve the SDGs (Tentatively planned from 10 to 12 April 2018)

BACKGROUND

In 2014 FAO organized the first International Symposium on Agroecology for Food Security and Nutrition in Rome. Over 400 participants representing governments, civil society, science and academia, the private sector and the UN organizations discussed the contribution of agroecology to sustainable food systems. The Symposium provided an opportunity to share experiences and build the evidence base on agroecology, as well as reached a consensus on the priorities. It also endorsed FAO's role to support the further implementation and scaling up of agro-ecological approaches.

Following the international symposium, a series of regional meetings¹ were held in 2015 and 2016. These meetings involved approximately 1,350 multi-stakeholder participants from 162 member countries. The meetings identified possible actions and public policies that could support the better development of agroecology in their regions. The meetings showcased the important contribution of agroecology, especially in (1) enhancing small holder and family farmers' adaptation and resilience to the effects of climate change; (2) improving nutrition including through more diversified diets; (3) protecting and enhancing agro-biodiversity in support of ecosystem services such as pollination and soil health; (4) improving livelihoods in rural areas; and (5) achieving a transformative change in agricultural practices towards sustainable development.

The adoption of the UN 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), as well as the Paris Agreement on climate change, put ***food security and agriculture at the center of the global development agenda***. This recognition was further strengthened in 2016 in the outcomes of both the United Nations Climate Change Conference in Morocco (COP22) and the United Nations Biodiversity Conference in Mexico (COP 13)². The UN Decade of Action on Nutrition, launched in 2015, highlights the need to take a nutrition-sensitive approach to agriculture.

The ***25th Session of COAG*** (September 2016), called on FAO to continue to strengthen its normative and science and evidence-based work in agroecology³. COAG also requested FAO to mainstream biodiversity in agriculture, including livestock, as a part of the FAO Strategy for work on climate change, and agroecology is one means to do so. This important COAG recommendation was endorsed by the 156th session of the FAO Council.

¹ 2015 Brazil (June); Thailand (November); Senegal (November)

2016 China (September); Bolivia (September); Hungary (November); Senegal (December);

² Cancun declaration - underlines the importance of promoting diversified agro-ecological systems

³ C 2017/21 para 25

JUSTIFICATION, OBJECTIVES AND EXPECTED OUTPUTS

Justification: The 2nd FAO Symposium will provide a basis for responding to the needs and challenges identified by the above mentioned regional meetings. Synthesizing and building on the outcome of the regional meetings, including their proposals for action, ***the Symposium will move the topic of agroecology in FAO from discussion/dialogue to activities at the regional and country level.*** It will complement on-going initiatives to integrate biodiversity and ecosystem services in agriculture through identifying opportunities for synergies with FAO's Strategic Programmes, Regional Initiatives and facilitating South-South cooperation.

Specific Objectives: The objective of the symposium will be to engage in a discussion of the contribution of agroecology to food security, improved nutrition and sustainable agriculture, and how it can assist countries to meet their commitments on sustainable development, climate change and biodiversity.

It will specifically present and discuss:

- a) Main Outcomes and key messages of the regional symposia;
- b) Identified needs and constraints faced by countries in adopting and implementing agroecology;
- c) Potential added-value of the adoption of policies to promote the use of agroecology, in the transition to more sustainable agriculture;
- d) Opportunities to strengthen support to member countries in capacity development in the context of FAO's Strategic Programmes (SP) in particular SP2 and SP3;
- e) Gap analyses for priority research;
- f) Clarify the relationship and possible synergies between agroecology and global initiatives on climate change, sustainable development, biodiversity and ecosystem services;
- g) Discuss a new forward looking and action-oriented "scaling up agroecology initiative" in cooperation with major partners such as IFAD and others.

Expected Outputs: The expected outputs of the meeting will include:

- a) Roadmap/pathway embedding the work on agroecology in FAO's Strategic Framework;
- b) Propose responses to the identified common/key regional needs and constraints, as well as priority research areas relevant to agroecology;
- c) Identify possible partners for cooperation mechanisms, including South-South cooperation, to enable countries to benefit from the expertise and experience of others;
- d) Sharpen and articulate the vision and focus of FAO's efforts in promoting and mainstreaming agroecology in agricultural policies and practices under the framework of SP2, to support the member countries develop concrete agroecology initiatives through enabling policies and supporting practices on the ground;
- e) Identify possible financing opportunities under the Green climate Fund (GCF), the Global Environment facility (GEF) and other sources.
- f) Launch of a new, forward looking and action-oriented "scaling up agroecology initiative" in cooperation with major partners such as IFAD and others.

SCOPE OF THE SYMPOSIUM:

The Symposium will take a multistakeholder, multisectoral (crops, livestock, fishery and forestry) and multidisciplinary approach to agroecology. It is expected that about 400 participants will attend the Symposium, representing policy makers, non-state actors, agroecology researchers and practitioners, as well as representatives from the regional meetings. The Symposium will not be a strictly intergovernmental meeting and will not produce a final declaration.

TENTATIVE PROGRAMME AND STRUCTURE:

The Symposium, tentatively scheduled over two and one half days during first half of 2018, will be structured around an opening plenary and a High Level Ministerial Segment (HLS) of a half day each, with the intervening time taken-up with a series of parallel discussions of approximately a half day (3 hours) each. The HLS is seen as an opportunity to enhance the visibility and the engagement of policy-makers in the process.

The preparation of this Symposium will require collaboration among colleagues and teams of the technical departments, SP teams, and Decentralized Offices. The symposium programme including a possible series of side events will be developed in close collaboration with an Interdepartmental Task Force (TF).

DELIVERY AND OVERSIGHT:

An Interdepartmental Task Force (TF), composed of representatives from across FAO, will serve as the executive body of the Symposium. The TF is chaired by Mr Ren Wang Assistant Director General of the Agriculture and Consumer Protection Department under the guidance of the Deputy Director General Ms Maria Helena Semedo. The TF is responsible for the development and delivery of the Symposium.

ESTIMATED BUDGET:

Based on experience the design of a 2.5 day meeting estimated a budget is in the order of 400,000 USD (see table 1).

The main costs include sponsoring travel of participants from least developed countries, representatives that played a key role in the national and regional meetings as well as external keynote speakers and session chairs, interpretation and translation and consultants to work with regional colleagues in putting together the regional reports and coordination of the event overall.

Costs	USD
Sponsored participants (travel and DSA)	150 000
Logistics/Interpretation.	80 000
Consultants for preparation of the Symposium.	120, 000
Proceedings and exhibition material, awareness	50, 000
TOTAL	400, 000