



Food and Agriculture
Organization of the
United Nations



United Nations
Decade of
**FAMILY
FARMING**
2019-2028



Policies to support organic agriculture and agroecology in the framework of the United Nations Decade of Family Farming 2019–2028



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Acknowledgements

This learning guide has been developed by IFOAM - Organics International in partnership with the Family Farming Engagement Team in the Partnerships and UN Collaboration Division (PSU) and the Ecosystem approach to crop production intensification Team in the Plant Production and Protection Division (NSP).

The publication draws upon the Global Policy Toolkit on Public Support to Organic Agriculture (IFOAM – Organics International, 2017) and other FAO publications (UNDIFF Global Action Plan, FAO Legal Paper 108, FAO Legal Brief 8) and projects (PGS Vietnam developed with FiBL and CARES for TAP-AIS project, APIRAS & APAARI; CASIC in Cambodia). This policy brief incorporates some content from these publications when relevant.

The preparation of this guide benefited from the technical review of several FAO experts, such as Pierre Ferrand, Mauro Conti, and Guilherme Brady, whom we thank for their comments and contributions, which undoubtedly enriched the final document.

Thanks are due to Cristina Grandi, Chief Food Security Campaigner at IFOAM – Organics International, as well as to all the technical referents who contributed at the preparation of this document.

The editorial review by Hazel Haddon and the layout work by José Luis Castilla Civit are gratefully acknowledged.

Policy brief rationale

The Global Action Plan (GAP) of the United Nations Decade of Family Farming 2019–2028 (UNDIFF) supports governments in developing and improving context-specific legal and institutional frameworks to better tailor, prioritize and target interventions and investments for the support of family farming (FAO and the International Fund for Agricultural Development [IFAD], 2019).

IFOAM – Organics International advocates with local, regional and national authorities, as well as donor agencies and multinational organizations, urging them to accelerate their efforts to support and promote organic agriculture and agroecology as the most viable system for family farmers and smallholders (IFOAM – Organics International, 2011).

With their approaches to soil, water and biodiversity conservation, as well as their integral and sustainable farm management, organic agriculture and agroecology can be highly productive, achieving family food security and improving incomes. Organic and agroecological farming systems are also more resilient than conventional systems that are highly dependent on expensive external inputs. Organic agriculture and agroecology have well-established practices that simultaneously mitigate climate change, build resilient farming systems, reduce poverty and improve food security (IFOAM – Organics International, 2011).

Scope

This document offers guidance to governments on how to support family farmers by promoting and implementing agroecology and organic agriculture approaches. It highlights a selection of relevant measures and provides real-world examples of successful implementation. The document will contribute to the implementation of the UNDIFF Global Action Plan's Pillars 1 and 7, as well as Pillars 4, 5 and 6, aiming at developing and reinforcing an inclusive policy environment for family farmers by facilitating full participation in the value chains of their choice (Committee on World Food Security [CFS], 2013).

Methodology

IFOAM – Organics International has accumulated decades of experience in supporting countries in developing public policies to support organic agriculture and agroecology, providing assistance to numerous governments and collecting evidence of best practices all over the world. As a result of these efforts, the Global Policy Toolkit on Public Support to Organic Agriculture was published in 2017, intended as a living document to be regularly updated as IFOAM – Organics International keeps abreast of major developments and innovations in the area of supporting policies for organic agriculture and agroecology (IFOAM – Organics International, 2017).

Building upon the UNDF's Global Action Plan, international recommendations on public policies to support family farming, and in particular on FAO Legal Paper 108 (Vapnek and Boaz, 2021) and Legal Brief 8 (Blondeau and Korzenszky, 2022), this policy brief presents selected supporting policies from the Global Policy Toolkit on Public Support to Organic Agriculture, which addresses organic agriculture and agroecology and can be specifically conducive to family farming. The toolkit includes examples of implementation in different countries, regions and municipalities. Recent data on impact are presented as much as possible, depending on the availability of this information.

Legal Paper 108 uses 12 categories of legal and regulatory instruments mapped to the pillars of the UNDF's Global Action Plan to identify laws, programmes and policies that support family farming in diverse contexts.

Legal Brief 8 builds on this paper, presenting different legislative and regulatory options to decision-makers to facilitate their appreciation of the complexity of the existing frameworks that underpin family farming. The legal brief emphasises four broad and interrelated areas that encompass prevalent issues for family farming: 1) access to resources and opportunities; 2) sustainability and traditions; 3) nutrition and healthy diets; and 4) resilience and socioeconomic status. In the brief below, relevant policies supporting organic agriculture and agroecology in relation to each of these four areas are discussed.

Key concepts

Family farming:

According to FAO's working definition, family farming (including all family based agricultural activities) is a means of organizing agricultural, forestry, fisheries, pastoral and aquaculture production that is managed and operated by a family, and that is predominantly reliant on the family labour of both women and men. The family and the farm are linked, co-evolve and combine economic, environmental, social and cultural functions (FAO, 2013). Family farming is the main form of agriculture and is responsible for producing 80 percent of the world's food. Recent research by FAO estimates that, worldwide, there are at least 550 million family farms (i.e. farms run by an individual or family and relying primarily on family labour); these operate 70–80 percent of farmland and produce roughly 80 percent of the world's food in value terms. "The policies needed for the largest farms in the world are most certainly different from those needed for resource poor and land-scarce farms in the low and middle-income countries" (Lowder, Sánchez and Bertini, 2021).

Multifunctionality and sustainable food systems:

Family farming is multifunctional, as it accounts for the majority of rural employment, most food production and the provision of ecosystem services, contributing to the preservation of natural resources and biological and cultural diversity in their rural settings. Smallholders and family farmers have therefore an essential role in food production and particularly in the implementation of sustainable food systems (IFOAM – Organics International, 2011). Strengthening the multidimensionality of family farming

is crucial to promoting social innovations that contribute to territorial development and food systems that safeguard biodiversity, the environment, and culture (see Pillar 7 of the Global Action Plan: FAO and IFAD, 2019).

Organic farmers are mostly smallholders, family farmers:

Although representing only a small share of the total number of farmers worldwide, smallholders' and family farmers' contribution to sustainable food systems is particularly relevant in the certified organic sector, as more than 80 percent of the almost four million certified organic producers worldwide are smallholders in low- and middle income countries (Meinshausen *et al.*, 2019).

Organic agriculture and agroecology for sustainable development:

"Agroecology is the science of applying ecological concepts and principles to manage interactions between plants, animals, humans and the environment for food security and nutrition. All over the world farmers already apply this approach, which has a fundamental pillar in traditional and local knowledge" (FAO, n.d.). With its techniques in soil, water and biodiversity conservation, as well as its integral and sustainable farm management, organic agriculture is a well-defined subset of agroecology and can be highly productive, achieve family food security and improve incomes. Organic and agroecological farming systems are also more resilient than conventional systems that are highly dependent on external inputs, providing a way to achieve ecological, agronomic and socioeconomic intensification for family farmers. Adoption of organic agriculture or agroecology, though, is vitally linked to market access. It is imperative that family farmers, in particular those managing smaller areas, are not marginalized or unduly excluded from markets because of factors beyond their control. Agroecology is an integrated approach that simultaneously applies ecological and social concepts and principles to the design and management of food and agricultural systems (FAO, 2018), and it is therefore important to develop integrated policy packages in this area that address a wide range of cross-cutting challenges simultaneously (FAO, 2023).

Agroecology and organic agriculture can support engagement of women and youth:

Agroecological and organic approaches have the potential to generate decent work opportunities for youth by developing inclusive, resilient and sustainable agriculture and food systems (High Level Panel of Experts [HLPE], 2019; CFS, 2022). These approaches can also increase gender equity and women's empowerment by helping address the impacts of climate change on food systems and supporting the sustainable use, conserve or restoration of biodiversity, land, soils and the environment, while promoting healthy diets (CFS, 2023).

Territorial food systems: In order to generate significant action and measurable progress to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by 2030, United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres has convened a Food Systems Summit (FSS) to raise global awareness and shape global commitments that can transform food systems to resolve hunger, reduce diet-related diseases and restore planetary health. The FSS secretariat have identified five action tracks: 1) ensuring access to safe and nutritious

food; 2) shifting to sustainable consumption patterns; 3) boosting nature-positive production; 4) advancing equitable livelihoods; and 5) building resilience. A territorial approach to sustainable food systems is essential to governance and planning of food systems and cuts across, can contribute to, and brings together the different action tracks (United Nations Capital Development Fund [UNCDF], 2021).



Policies supporting organic agriculture and agroecology, focusing on smallholder family farming

It is essential that implemented policies recognize and support the role family farmers play in contributing to sustainable food systems. IFOAM – Organics International works on reducing barriers and establishing supportive mechanisms that allow organic agriculture and agroecology to contribute to food security, climate resilience and rural development. This includes boosting the recognition and uptake of organic and agroecological practices within the policies of governments at all levels, as well as facilitating support to family farmers as main stakeholders and agents of change in the transition towards sustainable territorial food systems. These policies are complex because of their multidimensional and holistic nature. For countries that seek to engage in this transition, the issue of selecting appropriate policies is crucial. These policies must be adapted to their own food and agricultural systems (Place *et al.*, 2022). In any case, for their success a participatory approach is appropriate and necessary. Family farmers must be at the centre of the decision-making process, providing them with the tools to make informed decisions in a participatory manner. Governments may implement these through a variety of legislative and policy measures that include extension services and capacity building, public procurement, market creation, subsidies, and financial or tax incentives. This support may take the form of public policies presented in this brief.

1. Access to resources and opportunities

Family farmers face constraints in accessing, controlling and owning resources and productive assets. A significant way for decision-makers to facilitate family farmers' equitable access to resources and opportunities can be through legislation that supports the creation of organizations and cooperatives (Blondeau and Korzenszky, 2022).

1.1. Land tenure and other resources

Access to land and other natural resources is fundamental for the viability and sustainability of family farmers' livelihoods (IFAD, 2020). The SDGs recognize the fundamental role of small-scale food producers and family farmers, particularly of women and youth, and call for their access to land and other productive resources to reduce poverty and to improve their productivity and income. Policies should promote equitable tenure rights and access to land for all, including women and men, youth, and vulnerable and traditionally marginalized people (FAO, 2022). Policymakers should adopt support measures that promote youth and women's access to land while engaging them in the production of healthy and sustainable food by adopting agroecological and organic practices. This is a way to address youth unemployment, gender inequality and other global problems, such as food insecurity and climate change.

Policies and regulations related to land tenure rights have a strong impact on agricultural activity in general, be it conventional or organic agriculture. Restrictive approaches with policies that limit land acquisition and leasing favour the status instead of encouraging

transformation within the agriculture sector, thereby disproportionately affecting the development of organic farming, as often those interested in starting organic farming are young newcomers. At the same time, policymakers should not allow the unrestricted movement of capital into land acquisitions, as it can affect smallholders' access to land. This trend may contribute to increasing the price of land, creating greater obstacles for newcomers, especially young people with agroecological business projects, who may lack capital.

Land policies can, however, mitigate the risks faced by (organic and agroecological) tenants by securing farmers rights and stimulating the adoption of sustainable agriculture practices, based on agroecology and the principles of organic agriculture. Land tenure policies that incentivize organic agriculture and agroecology, associated with extension, input and infrastructure support, benefit family farmers, particularly youth entering the agriculture sector.

Good practice: Supporting women in agroecology and organic production in Brazil

In Brazil, the National Plan on Agroecology and Organic Production (PNAPO) 2013–2015 established a series of objectives to promote the development of organic agriculture and agroecology in the country. One of these objectives (Objective 2) was to recognize and value the role of women in organic and agroecological production, strengthening their autonomy and economic development. As a result, this plan supported 556 women's networks, benefiting 5 566 rural women. Furthermore, 960 professionals and political leaders were trained on financing women in organic and agroecological agriculture, which benefited 5 200 rural women in 20 different Brazilian states.

Good practice: Supporting young farmers' access to land in France

In France, the Young Farmers' Grant (Dotation jeune agriculteur) was introduced as a measure to facilitate access to land by providing young people with various forms of financial support. It is granted on condition that the applicant holds a professional agricultural capacity degree (i.e. that he or she has undergone specific training) and has designed a four-year business plan for an economically viable project that will generate sufficient agricultural income. This subsidy is 80 percent financed by the European Union's Common Agricultural Policy (2018–2022 and 2023–2027) and 20 percent by the national budget of France (HLPE, 2021; *Rural and Maritime Fishing Code*, 1979). This aid can be increased by an additional boost if the projects include an agroecological or organic commitment, depending on the region of France (Territoires Bio, 2022).

1.2. Cooperatives and associations

The promotion of cooperatives and associations (including farmers' organizations and networks) is an important category of legislative and regulatory measures for countries seeking to strengthen the enabling environment for family farming, as well as for organic agriculture and agroecology. Historically, organic associations have initiated most elements of the organic sector, ranging from certification (with pioneers like the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland Soil Association and the United States of America California Certified Organic Farmers), to training and advice to farmers, organic consumer fairs, developing a national organic logo, and implementing consumer awareness campaigns. Particularly if they are federated at the national level, and provided that they are strong politically and financially, organic associations can play a decisive role in the development of the organic and agroecology sector, with specific benefits for smallholder family farming.

They provide a platform for family farmers to cooperate to resolve production issues, purchase inputs or machinery that is used collectively and access new channels through joint marketing. Cooperatives and associations also provide relevant general agricultural services such as data collection, capacity building, political facilitation and ownership building, market development and advocacy for organic agriculture, agroecology and family farming. Governments can provide funds for organic associations to implement particular activities, (e.g. consumer education, capacity building of producers, or participation in policy design) as well as institutional support to organic associations by funding their core activities and expenses (e.g. staff salaries, contribution to administrative costs, or purchase of office equipment). Institutional support presents the advantage of empowering members of the organization to set priorities democratically for the organization.

“Governments wishing to encourage or strengthen cooperatives have a variety of tools at their disposal. First and foremost, legislation is needed to authorize the creation and operation of these types of groups. For example, the Bolivian Law No. 338 of 2013 on family farming addresses farmer associations in detail, as does Paraguay's family farming Law No. 6286 of 2019. Legislative and policy measures must also support the financial stability of such associations as there can be, for instance, unexpected consequences of tax rules that can support or hollow out structures intended to benefit certain groups or types of organizations” (Vapnek and Boaz, 2021).

Policies and legislation may refer to specific provisions favourable to those organizations, such as increased space for participation in decision-making processes, tax exemptions, targeted and preferential credit lines, or access to extension and advisory services.



Good practice: Strengthening networks of agroecological and organic family farmers in Brazil

In 2014, Brazil launched a programme named ECOFORTE to strengthen and increase the networks on agroecology, wild collection and organic agriculture, as part of the country's National Plan for Agroecology and Organic Production (PLANAPO). The programme allocated EUR 70 million to support 30 networks of organizations promoting organic agriculture, agroecology and wild collection over two years.

The programme was implemented through public calls for proposals to select the networks to be supported, defined as groupings of at least three organizations, such as producers' cooperatives or associations. The networks should mobilize, build capacity and disseminate information and technology to strengthen their organic and agroecological member organizations. These activities could include: purchasing of machinery and equipment; building or infrastructure development; support for value chain development and marketing; increasing women and youth participation; institutional capacity building through exchanges, workshops, training, meetings; research (feasibility and impact studies); financing and business plans; technical assistance for compliance with the national regulation on organic production; and integration with educational institutions or creation of study and research centres within these institutions. The financial assistance requested had to include 50 percent of infrastructure development costs and 50 percent of management, capacity building and technical assistance costs.

"Ecoforte was conceived as a Program for Strengthening and Expanding Agroecology, Wild collection and Organic Production Networks. The use of the network concept as a guiding reference for public action was one of the main novelties of this public policy instrument" (Schmitt et al., 2020).

The vast majority of networks that received support have family farmers and smallholders as their beneficiaries. "It has become possible to finance, by means of a single instrument (i.e. the same call for projects), investments considered as tangible (including machinery, equipment, vehicles, and facilities) and investments classified as intangible (technical assistance, educational and training activities, among others)" (Schmitt et al., 2020).

"In addition, as initiatives supported by Ecoforte have shown, public policies oriented to the strengthening of territorial agroecology networks involving rural settlements and traditional communities are indispensable conditions for the reversal of trends that weaken family agriculture, contributing to the mobilization of segments of the rural population that have historically been marginalized by the State, as agents of economies of scope, redistributive and regenerative" (Schmitt et al., 2020).

After the success of the first edition, the second phase of ECOFORTE was launched in 2017.¹ This edition is set to focus on strengthening networks and expanding dialogue and partnerships.

1. Currently, in a scenario marked by the launch of the PLANAPO 2024–2027, the resumption of the ECOFORTE programme is in process, and a new technical cooperation agreement has been signed by the national authorities, the Brazilian Agricultural Research Corporation, the National Bank for Economic and Social Development, the Banco do Brasil foundation, and Banco do Brasil.

Good practice: Promotion of organic and agroecological cooperatives in the European Union

The European Union's rural development policy is part of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP), and it is often referred to as its second pillar. It complements the system of direct payments and supports the rural areas of the European Union, many of which face social and economic challenges. Through the Rural Development Program for 2014–2020, the European Union has been supporting cooperatives of organic farmers or related to agroecology. This included a special measure (Measure 16) related to “cooperation,” which encouraged farmers to cooperate and create innovative products. In addition to this, there were other measures to support the development of advisory services, research, and investment (European Commission, n.d.-a).

In December 2021, the agreement on the reform of the Common Agricultural Policy was officially adopted. With a new reform approved for 2023–2027, the Common Agriculture Policy needs to align with the European Green Deal by meeting the ambitions of the EU Farm to Fork and Biodiversity strategies. This will entail a greater emphasis on support measures for family farmers and other smallholders who embrace organic agriculture or agroecology and their cooperatives. Around 760 000, or 8 percent, of EU farms will receive support to participate in producer groups and organizations, short supply chain circuits and quality schemes (European Commission, 2022).

2. Sustainability and traditions

Laws and policies can contribute to the sustainability of the family farm on two different levels: supporting the agrifood systems transformation through sustainable agricultural models, which promote biodiversity and the conservation of natural resources, as well as the use of environmentally sound practices; and promoting the multifaceted role of family farming through income diversification measures.

2.1. Participatory Guarantee Systems

Participatory Guarantee Systems (PGS) are locally focused quality assurance systems. They certify producers based on active participation of stakeholders and are built on a foundation of trust, social networks and knowledge exchange. PGS represent an alternative to third-party certification, specially adapted to local markets and short supply chains. They are also sometimes referred to as “participatory certification.” They share a common objective with third-party certification systems in providing a credible guarantee for consumers seeking organic products. The difference is in the path to accomplish this, with the emphasis being on stakeholder participation and transparency.

PGS offer numerous benefits, including improved access to organic markets through a guarantee system for small-scale producers (as these systems are much more affordable than third-party certification), increased education and awareness among



consumers (by involving them in the guarantee process), promotion of short supply chains and local market development, and farmer capacity building and empowerment. In other words, supporting PGS development is a way to promote agroecology and organic agriculture adoption, but also livelihood improvements through market access and empowerment of family farmers.

If a country regulates organic agriculture, it is crucial that the organic regulation does not hinder PGS development by deliberately or inadvertently not including them, thereby making these systems illegal. When PGS are recognized at the same level as third-party organic certification, PGS-certified producers can access the same policy benefits as third-party certified organic operators. But there are other ways in which governments can invest specific resources in promoting PGS development, such as by financing projects that set up PGS initiatives, or by providing financial support to existing PGS initiatives to cover expenses such as farmer training, committee meetings, development of standards and operating manuals, and communication and networking. They may also enable diverse marketing channels such as farmers' markets through the provision of free sites, infrastructure, electricity and water.

Good practice: Support for PGS initiatives in Brazil

In Brazil, the Ministry of Agrarian Development supports PGS initiatives and social control organizations (the other form of alternative verification systems allowed for direct marketing under the Brazilian organic regulations). For example, the ministry, in partnership with the Federal South Minas Institute, carried out a diagnosis of these organizations to identify existing initiatives and potential new ones. In 2016, around EUR 91 000 was allocated to support family farmers and technicians involved in these initiatives. The budget allocated for 2017 was even higher (around EUR 268 000) to implement the consolidation of the existing PGS initiatives, train hundreds of extension agents in PGS, support the establishment of new PGS initiatives and publish various resources for PGS promotion. Currently there are over 20 PGS initiatives accredited by the national competent authority, certifying more than 8 000 family farmers.

Good practice: Facilitating PGS growth in India

In India, the NGO sector has been a pioneer in PGS and has managed to grow the PGS movement from a few farmers before 2006 to more than 6 000 certified in 2015. It has also managed to consolidate the various independent NGO initiatives into one single national PGS system, the PGS Organic Council. However, there are limitations in terms of the capacity for the NGO sector to include the large number of farmers and farmers' groups interested in joining the PGS movement in India.

In 2015, the Government of India launched the Paramparagat Krishi Vikas Yojana (PKVY) scheme to promote organic agriculture and PGS in India (India Department of Administrative Reforms & Public Grievances, 2017). It offered an alternative PGS system that is government-facilitated and benefits from important and stable resources, enabling rapid uptake of PGS in the country. The National Center for Organic and Natural Farming has built an online system to facilitate farmers groups in registering for the PGS. The PGS recognition is done by NGOs accredited as regional councils, working on voluntary basis. This scheme allowed a huge increase in the PGS movement. As of 2023, according to the PGS India website (National Centre for Organic and Natural Farming, n.d.), there are more than 60 000 groups and 1.5 million farmers (certified organic or in conversion) involved in PGS India, with a cumulative area of around 1 million hectares.



Good practice: Legal recognition of PGS in the Philippines

In the Philippines, efforts on PGS began when the network MASIPAG² launched the MASIPAG Farmers Guarantee System (MFGS). This happened shortly after the organizations' participation in the Alternative Certification Workshop organized by IFOAM – Organics International in Brazil in 2004. Since then, MASIPAG has been involved in the development of PGS all over the country, mostly for its members and partner organizations (Buena, 2020).

In 2010, the *Republic Act 10068*, or the Organic Agriculture Law, was enacted. The law supports the growing organic agriculture movement in the country. However, Section 17 of the law allowed only third-party certification to be labelled as organic. For MASIPAG, this is a disservice to small-scale organic farmers in the country who cannot afford to pay third-party certification costs.

In response to what MASIPAG believed was an unfair situation for the farmers, the network started advocating for PGS recognition in 2011. Despite the importance and urgency, it was only in 2020 that the Senate finally approved an amendment of RA 10068 with a particular focus on PGS. With this recognition, policymakers should be reminded that, alongside recognizing PGS, they should also acknowledge the central role of small-scale farmers, as well as Indigenous Peoples and their communities, in the development of the organic agriculture sector, as they continuously provide healthy food and vibrant economic activity.

The recognition of PGS should therefore be reinforced by the provision of appropriate support in terms of production, processing, prioritization of local distribution and marketing. Related policies such as genuine agrarian reform, protection of the environment and stoppage of land use conversion should be in place to fully realize an “increase farm productivity and farmer incomes, reduce pollution and destruction of the environment, prevent the depletion of natural resources, encourage the participation of Indigenous organic farmers promoting their sustainable practices further protect the health of farmers, consumers, and the general public,” as stated in the amended law (Buena, 2020).



2. MASIPAG is a farmer-led network of people's organizations, NGOs and scientists. For more information see: www.masipag.org.

Good practice: Growth of PGS in Viet Nam

In Viet Nam, “PGS have now been set up in more than seven provinces (Ha Noi, Ha Nam, Hoa Binh, Tuyen Quang, Cao Bang, Ben Tre and Hoi An). With training and/or coaching by the Vietnam Organic Agriculture Association (VOAA), at least five other local governments have expressed interest in setting up organic PGS groups in their respective provinces” (Dang, 2019). A note on the topic explains: “A farmer can voluntarily join a PGS scheme, committing to contribute to the selforganization of the local PGS group. Inter-farmer groups coordinate local groups and act as intermediaries with PGS Vietnam, the PGS coordination body” (Asia-Pacific Islands Rural Advisory Services Network [APIRAS] and Asia-Pacific Association of Agricultural Research Institutions [APAARI], 2023).

“With the decree on organic agriculture recognizing PGS (109/2018/ND-CP and national standard set TCVN 110410), there has been official recognition in Vietnam of organic PGS production and products, but support has not yet been provided at the central level. This gap is partially filled by PGS Vietnam, which has the mandate to support smallholder farmers engaging in local markets, and which coordinates 40 PGS groups in 4 local areas” (APIRAS and APAARI, 2023).

2.2. Farmers' markets

Farmers' markets are highly compatible with the ideals of the organic movement in terms of reducing food miles, shortening the supply chain, and sustaining small and diversified production such as that of family farmers. As they promote more direct relations between producers and consumers, farmers' markets also serve an educational role – when consumers learn about the benefits of certain kinds of farming from the farmers themselves rather than from communication materials, they are more likely to seek out these products (this effect was demonstrated for integrated pest management practices by Anderson *et al.*, 1996.)

Local governments or municipalities can support weekly organic farmers' markets, typically via the provision of a free location, and sometimes by providing infrastructure such as stands, electricity and water. Additionally, the government or municipality can host the market management within its offices, and even pay the salaries of the staff that organize and coordinate the market.

Although the majority of support is at the local level, national approaches to supporting organic farmers' markets are also possible. The national government may set aside a budget to cover grants for organic farmers' markets to support their expansion, communication, the training of market managers, and other relevant activities. Support can also be provided for national or regional networks of farmers' markets. These networks can play an important role in ensuring the authenticity of markets, for example by operating an appropriate guarantee system, such as a PGS initiative to ensure organic quality of the produce, as well as promoting markets to the public and coordinating days of operation within the network.

Good practice: Support for farmers' markets in the Plurinational State of Bolivia

In the Plurinational State of Bolivia, support was given to local organic markets in the context of a government–UN cooperation programme from 2009 to 2013 aiming to integrate Indigenous Andean producers into new national and international value chains. Support was given to local marketing spaces such as farmers' markets, including the Raymi organic farmers' markets in Sipe Sipe municipality (Cochabamba), Bio Tarija and Bio Achocalla.

Law No. 338 of 2013, aimed at strengthening peasant family farming, and the subsequent *Law No. 923 of 2017*, which designates 21 November as the National Day for the Consumption of Organic and Agroecological Foods, offer a legal framework to support farmers' markets for agroecological products. These laws give the opportunity to organize national organic and agroecological fairs on the occasion of the national day as well as monthly and weekly fairs at regional and local level. Local authorities provide the spaces and structures free of charge, while their organization is in the hands of farmers' organizations and civil society.

Good practice: Establishment of organic trading posts in the Philippines

In the Philippines, government has supported the establishment of “organic trading posts” across the country. These trading posts play a dual role as both input shops (selling inputs for organic farming) and organic shops (selling organic products to consumers or intermediary buyers). The concept was decided by the Department of Agriculture in 2012, and applications were submitted by local government units in 2013. The eligibility criteria for approval of organic trading posts included a targeted location (i.e. strategic sites where organic farming is more advanced and where demonstration farms have been established) and local government's willingness to provide counterparts for the project. The criteria also specify the types of products allowed to be traded in these trading posts, with an inclusive approach accepting both third party and PGS certified organic products.

As of 2022, there were 85 established organic trading posts throughout the Philippines (Philippines Department of Agriculture, 2022). The National Organic Agriculture Program monitors them (Philippines Department of Agriculture, 2018).

2.3. Income diversification measures

Agroecological diversification, which is the base of agroecology and organic agriculture, contributes to both ecological and socioeconomic resilience (FAO, 2018). It is crucial to ensure that supplementary income sources align harmoniously with the functioning of the family farm (Barrios, 2020). Moreover, engaging women and youth in income diversification is vital for the resilience and sustainability of agricultural communities (FAO and IFAD, 2019).

Farm income diversification refers to the process of reallocation of farm resources (i.e. land, labour or capital) towards non-traditional crop or animal production, including

processing, packaging, and developing innovative market alternatives. Additionally, income diversification for smallholders includes the development of non-agricultural activities on the farm, such as agrotourism and educational initiatives for children. These activities offer more opportunities for women to gain revenues as women may already be involved in these types of activities. In addition, these new initiatives can support youth integration into family farming and can facilitate generational renewal in the sector.

Supporting farm income diversification is therefore a way for governments to tackle those problems at the root by encouraging a rural economy structure that provides more income and job diversification opportunities for farming families. Additionally, diversified farms, such as those that combine farming with agrotourism or with food processing and direct marketing activities (e.g. on-farm shop, etc.) are often more diverse agronomically and more attractive visually. Finally, diversification often means that farms are going beyond a simple food commodity production role, and developing additional linkages with society at large (through links with consumers, tourists, school children, etc.).

Public support for farm income diversification and agrotourism usually benefits organic and family farms disproportionately, since they fit better with the societal ideal of farming. Their diverse landscapes and non-toxic environments are attractive to the public. Encouraging agrotourism on organic farms is also a highly effective way to support market development and create new demand for organic products.

2.4. Territorial food systems

Family farmers can also benefit from a territorial food system approach that involves cooperation between local governments and all local private actors along the food value chain. This approach supports family farmers by prioritizing local food production and consumption and facilitating direct connections between producers and end consumers.

Following the concept of the territorial food system approach, but with the aim of linking the expansion of organic agriculture to territorial development and the promotion of the territory as an eco-tourism destination, different approaches were developed under the terms biodistricts, organic districts and eco-regions.

All these experiences promote territorial food systems and are based on cooperation between organic and agroecological farmers and local institutions, such as protected areas, municipalities, processors, local restaurants, tourist resorts, B&Bs, local shops, etc. Restaurants and tourist resorts are encouraged to offer local organic products and integrate a short supply chain.

These concepts are strategically designed to promote organic farming and agroecology and facilitate sustainable activities, aiming to protect the environment, enhance social welfare, and drive economic prosperity.

Good practice: Establishing the biodistrict concept in Italy

In Italy, the organic farmers' organization AIAB established the biodistrict³ concept in 2009, setting up the first such area in Cilento (Campania). Thanks to its success and rapid expansion, the Government of Italy recognized biodistricts in its National Organic Plan, adopted in 2014 as an important tool for the development of the organic sector. From there, the Italian institutions, national and local, developed a series of laws⁴ and regulations⁵ to provide a legal framework. This framework defines the requirements and conditions for the establishment of biodistricts. Different regions have also developed their own legislation. Although they do not have a specific source of financing, biodistricts can access a series of financial sources: European (qualifying as rural development programmes – see European Commission, n.d.-a), national (Fund for Organic Agriculture), and local.

Since 2009, the number of biodistricts has grown incrementally. There are now at least 51 such districts in Italy, both established and in the process of being established, involving 646 municipalities for a total area of 34 088 km² (Sturla, Dara Guccione and Vigano, 2021). Although their structure is characterized by great diversity, they have demonstrated their ability to propose an innovative approach to the problems of rural spaces, based on the values of organic agriculture and agroecology.

Good practice: The Idanha-a-Nova eco-region in Portugal

Idanha-a-Nova municipality in Portugal, with an area of 1 416 km² and a population of 8 355, is one of the largest and least densely populated municipalities in the country. It also has the oldest population of any municipality. Idanha-a-Nova's eco-region, the largest area of agricultural land subject to organic farming in Portugal, was created in February 2018, when it joined the INNER network (the International Network of Eco Regions) after a long participative process.

With the establishment of this eco-region, several goals were pursued. Among them were the improvement of the preservation of ecosystems, the promotion of organic production, and the raising of awareness of the importance of organic food in health and well-being.

At the same time, agrotourism has been promoted as a form of economic growth compatible with sustainable development, as it encourages environmental conservation, the preservation of the region's cultural heritage and the creation of employment in rural areas. Furthermore, this eco-region is supporting projects that reinforce short supply chains and increase the offer of organic products. The success of this initiative led to the recognition of Idanha-a-Nova as Best Organic Bio-District at the European Organic Production Awards in 2023.⁶

3. According to the AIAB, the organization that registers the term biodistrict in Italy, a biodistrict is a geographical area naturally suited to organic production in which the various actors in the territory (farmers, private citizens, associations, tourism operators and public administrations) enter into an agreement for the sustainable management of resources, focusing on organic production, that involves all the links in the supply chain up to consumption. In short, a biodistrict is a pact for the green development of a territory, involving organic producers, local administration and civil society.

4. Law No. 205 of 27/12/2017 and Law No. 23 of 9/03/2022.

5. Decree of the Agriculture Ministry on 28/12/2022.

6. For more information see: <https://www.ecoregion.info/bio-regiao-idanha-a-nova-portugal/>; <https://idanha.pt/>; and https://www.europeanorganiccongress.bio/wp-content/uploads/2023/10/EOC2023_Armando_Jacinto.pdf.

Good practice: Establishment of organic villages in Japan

In Japan, the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries is working to create model areas, named organic villages, where the entire community engages in organic farming, based on the country's MIDORI strategy launched in 2021 (Japan Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries, 2023), which is the medium-long term strategy for a sustainable food system. An organic village is a municipality that promotes community-wide efforts involving not only farmers but also business operators and residents inside and outside the region, from production to consumption of organic agriculture. The idea is to gradually create advanced model areas and expand nationwide. Specific examples that the ministry supports are the establishment of organic agricultural clusters with technical guidance, business matching inside and outside the region, procurement for school meals, and establishment of organic corners at retailers. As of November 2023, 91 municipalities are working on establishing organic villages, with the goal of 200 municipalities by 2030 (Japan Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries, n.d.).

Good practice: Asian Local Governments for Organic Agriculture (ALGOA)

The Asia Local Governments for Organic Agriculture (ALGOA) project⁷ was first initiated by IFOAM Asia in 2013 with the aim of linking bio-villages/eco-villages in India, the Philippines, and the Republic of Korea.

During the first Goesan International Organic Expo in September 2015, ALGOA was established as a member-based organization of local governments and IFOAM Asia affiliates that would come together to exchange and build strategies to take the organic sector forward. It aims for 100-percent adoption of organic practices, provides policy support and helps local governments to put national government policies into action on the ground.

Since 2015, ALGOA has grown from an initial 21 members to more than 268 members in 17 countries and areas. ALGOA's activities are based on a memorandum of understanding (MoU) that was signed by the founding local governments and IFOAM Asia. They include:

- ▶ policy support for countries developing organic agriculture;
- ▶ information exchanges on the best practices and innovations on organic agriculture;
- ▶ mutual exchanges of local government personnel/experts and organic stakeholders
- ▶ education for local government officials on organic agriculture;
- ▶ hosting of the annual ALGOA summit.

The core work areas are the annual ALGOA Organic Foundation Course (a capacity-building programme for local government officials) and the annual ALGOA summit of local government leaders and representatives from the organic sector.

7. For more information see: <https://www.algoa-organics.org/>.



3. Nutrition and healthy diets

Decision-makers can intervene along supply chains to lower the distribution and transaction costs of nutritious food and to support the establishment of direct relationships between family farmers and consumers.

3.1. Public procurement and school feeding programmes

Sourcing school food and nutrition from family farmers is a widely used public procurement method that provides several benefits in the efforts to achieve the SDGs. Public food procurement, whereby governments allocate a share of their budget to purchase food for public institutions such as schools and day care centres, has the potential to support family farmers by helping them generating more income. This can reduce poverty in the wider community. In addition, it offers a channel to favour the production and consumption of nutritious food and healthy diets, especially when the procurement is for school meals (FAO *et al.*, 2020).

Public procurement choices can have a strong symbolic impact, supporting the increase in the consumption of organic and agroecological products and contributing to reducing food and nutrition inequalities. The right choices in procurement can provide access to fresh, nutritious organic food to a broad public, including children in poorer and vulnerable households. At the same time, public procurement can significantly stimulate the demand for domestically produced organic products, thus creating market channels for producers, especially for women and young family farmers, and stimulating the growth of sustainable agricultural practices.

The inclusion of women family farmers in public procurement programmes empowers women to actively engage in trade, traditionally dominated by men, and provides a consistent source of income for their families. Public procurement programmes have a transformative potential to revolutionize the food system, reduce gender disparities, and empower women through targeted public policies.

Public institutions typically offer long-term contracts that represent a reliable and stable source of income for organic and agroecological family farms. This is a good way to encourage existing agroecological and organic farmers to invest in expanding their production and can also send strong signals to conventional producers to convert their agricultural practices. Public procurement of local, organic and family farmers' produce for school feeding programmes creates a variety of social and environmental benefits, and supports the objective of increasing access to healthy food for all.

One approach to implementing such policies at regional or national level is to use constraints, meaning obliging public canteens not merely to prioritize but to source a certain percentage of products locally, from family farmers and specific communities, adopting organic or agroecological practices. Alternatively, an incentive-based approach can be used, meaning policies that provide grants and technical support to public canteens wishing to move in this direction, or financial incentives to those that have reached a certain threshold of organic or agroecological products purchased from family farmers within a certain region. This kind of support addresses a broader range of policy objectives, including promoting the economic development of local farms and processors in the areas where the schools are based. In some municipalities this means that family farmers produce the organic food that is consumed by their children in school.

To guarantee the success of the introduction of organic and agroecological family farming food programmes, coordination of the different authorities at the national and local level is necessary. At the national level it would have to do with the participation of the ministries of agriculture, environment, education, social welfare and health. At the local level, the different authorities, municipalities, schools, etc., should also involve both the agroecological producer organizations of the region and the representatives of parents.

By implementing school feeding programmes, there is a fundamental opportunity to shift consumption patterns towards nutritious and healthy foods. This shift not only has significant implications for value chains and markets but also underscores the intrinsic connection between human health and environmental sustainability. The implementation of nutritional education within school feeding policies can have a pivotal impact by raising awareness about the significance of healthy food habits. It also encourages collaborative efforts to develop alternative dietary options, leading to positive shifts in consumer demand. As public consciousness continues to grow, it can effectively advocate for governance policies that support organic and agroecological transitions, resulting in the production of diverse, nutritious, and healthy food options.

Capacity building is an essential aspect in the process of sourcing more organic products. Policy decisions with targets to increase the share of organic and agroecological products consumed in public canteens should contain budget provisions to support the training of public staff in charge of purchasing food, canteen staff, teachers (for schools), as well as the canteen suppliers, such as public catering companies.

Efforts are also necessary to organize producers in local supply chains so that they are able to respond collectively to the demand for particular products from public canteens and to organize storage, processing and deliveries. Sometimes this may involve setting up projects to encourage conversion to organic farming, in order to anticipate the increase in demand when canteens shift to organic and agroecological products.

It is recommended an incremental approach be used to increase the proportion of organic and agroecological products on the menu each year (starting with the easiest to accomplish), in order to give time for the suppliers to adapt and plan their production. A preliminary analysis of the organic and/or agroecological products available in the locality, including their seasonality and the available quantities, can assist in planning the menus and the tender. Carefully designed calls for tenders, based on dialogue and joint planning that involves all stakeholders, particularly local family farmers and their organizations, is a key tool to influence the quality, quantity and availability of food that can be procured. Training of catering companies and kitchen staff, as well as education and sensitization of canteen users, are also important aspects.

Good practice: Environmentally friendly food for pregnant women in the Republic of Korea

The Pregnant Women Food Scheme was launched in January 2020 in the Republic of Korea (ALGOA, 2020). The programme aimed to provide 45 000 pregnant women and new mothers with a box of local, “environmentally friendly” food. After the COVID-19 pandemic, the number of beneficiaries of the programme was increased to 80 000. These women were able to receive a package of locally sourced, environmentally friendly products twice a month. The programme used direct e-commerce methods, linking the women with local farmers. The scheme is being implemented by two cities, one province and twenty-three other local governments.

According to the country’s Environmentally Friendly Promotion Law, “environmentally-friendly food includes both organic and pesticide-free food” (ALGOA, 2020). The project is implemented through online orders in specific websites set up by the local government authorities. Twenty percent of the costs are self-paid while the rest of the costs are supported by the central and local governments. This project has received a very good favourable response from the Korean public especially in this COVID-19 pandemic and is a good example of the government taking a pro-active approach to help the local farmers and provide safe, and nutritious local food to its people.

Good practice: Organic school lunches in Taiwan Province of China

New Taipei City in Taiwan Province of China is actively promoting organic agriculture, particularly through the implementation of the Organic Nutrition Lunch Policy in schools since 2012. This policy aims to instil organic awareness in children and transform the dietary habits, contributing to sustainable development. From the initial implementation of 14 schools, the policy has expanded to 685 schools and has benefited approximately 320 000 students by providing them with organic and locally produced vegetables.

This successful policy has also a significant influence in Taiwan Province of China and has led to the adoption of similar policies in other cities. In 2016, the Ministry of Education and the Council of Agriculture of the Executive Yuan jointly established a policy that prioritizes the use of traceable and local ingredients in school meals, known as the “three marks and one QR code” (Taiwan Province of China Agriculture and Food Agency, n.d.).



Good practice: Driving organic food accessibility through public procurement in Brazil

In Latin America, Brazil is the leader in terms of organic purchases in public procurement. Brazil is at the forefront of sustainable food public procurement policies in Latin America. Policy initiatives exist at various levels, including the national level, the state level, and the municipality level.

At the national level, the Food Acquisition Program (PAA), launched in 2003, supported the purchase of diverse, locally produced food from family agriculture and preferably from sustainable systems, which helped small organic farmers gain market access for their products. In 2009, the National School Feeding Program (PNAE) aimed to purchase at least 30 percent of the products for school meals from local family farmers, prioritizing organic and agroecological foods. The programme feeds 47 million students each day in Brazilian public schools. As of 2019, 3 676 of 5 537 municipalities in Brazil have implemented 30 percent or more purchases from family farmers. These programmes provided not only strong incentives for conversion to organic farming and agroecology, but also universal access to organic and agroecological food which was beforehand only affordable for an elite population, and income generation for smallholder farmers.

At the state level, a leading example is the state of Paraná which, in its *Law 16 751 of 2010*, set a target of 100 percent organic school meals for its 1.3 million pupils. In 2020, 60 percent of ingredients were purchased from family farmers and 8 percent were certified organic, increasing to 10.5 percent in 2021 (Brazil State of Paraná Educational Development Agency, n.d.), which corresponds to around 10.6 million kg of food. Approximately one million students benefited from healthier food as a result.

In Paraná, only family farming provides this type of organic product for school meals. It is estimated that at least 18 000 families, or about 100 000 people, are directly involved in the production and delivery of organic food to the State School Feeding Program (PEAE).

For 2022 it was expected that 20 percent of all ingredients purchased for school meals would be organic, which included a wide variety of food groups (fruits, vegetables, spices, bread, milk, yogurt, fruit juice and pulp, beans, rice, strawberries, popcorn, and eggs, among others). A total of BRL 120 million in food would be contracted directly from family farms to be supplied between 2022 and June 2023. The objective was exceeded, since 23 percent of the food purchased was organic, investing more than BRL 150 million and bringing organic food to schools in 270 municipalities (68 percent of the total) (Brazil State of Paraná Educational Development Agency, 2023).

4. Resilience and socioeconomic status

Diversified agroecological systems are more resilient – they have a greater capacity to recover from disturbances including extreme weather events such as drought, floods or hurricanes, and to resist pest and disease attack. Agroecological approaches can equally enhance socioeconomic resilience. Through diversification and integration, producers reduce their vulnerability should a single crop, livestock species or other commodity fail. By reducing dependence on external inputs, agroecology can reduce producers' vulnerability to economic risk. Enhancing ecological and socioeconomic resilience go hand-in-hand – after all, humans are an integral part of ecosystems (FAO, 2018).

“Robust scientific evidence demonstrates that agroecology increases climate resilience. Success factors for this are that agroecology builds on: a) ecological principles, in particular on biodiversity, overall diversity and healthy soils; b) social aspects, in particular on the co-creation and sharing of knowledge and fostering traditions” (Leippert *et al.*, 2020).

4.1. Agroecological approaches

“Agroecological approaches can equally enhance socioeconomic resilience. Through diversification and integration, producers reduce their vulnerability should a single crop, livestock species or other commodity fail. By reducing dependence on external inputs, agroecology can reduce producers' vulnerability to economic risk. Enhancing ecological and socioeconomic resilience go hand-in-hand – after all, humans are an integral part of ecosystems” (FAO, 2018).

“Legislation can therefore play a critical role in assisting family farmers to scale up their climate resilience by strengthening their adaptation ability on the one hand, such as through the promotion of agroecological practices, in addition to offering them wide access to climate risk insurance on the other (FAO, IFAD, UNICEF, WFP and WHO, 2021)” (Blondeau and Korzenszky, 2022).

Good practice: Smallholder competitiveness in Bangladesh

The Ministry of Agriculture of Bangladesh is implementing the Smallholder Agriculture Competitiveness Project 2018–2024 (SACP). This project is funded by the Government of Bangladesh and IFAD, and it draws on FAO's technical expertise. This project aims to increase food security and the welfare of smallholders, often including family farmers, by helping them increase their income. The purpose is to support agroecological diversification, which leads to an increase in productivity. The project, which targets the most vulnerable households and vulnerable groups (women and youth), will reach 250 000 rural households in southern Bangladesh.

Good practice: Supporting farmers to grow nutritious local crops in Kenya

In Kenya, pilot project SINGI brings together key actors to grow interest in nutritious local vegetables. “Working closely with the Kenyan Ministry of Agriculture as well as global research organizations such as Bioversity International, SINGI has contributed to research on nutritious crops for the multicountry Biodiversity for Food and Nutrition Project. SINGI has built a multisectoral, multilevel platform that draws fresh recognition to the potential of nutritious local agrobiodiversity for food and nutrition security, as well as improved local ecosystems. This is a carefully conducted and community-driven approach that takes the best of traditional ‘plants of the past’ and utilizes them as a way forward for a healthy and prosperous future” (Equator Initiative, n.d.).

“Based in western Kenya, SINGI promotes organic ecological agriculture while building the capacity of small-scale farmers, communities, groups, and vulnerable individuals to improve their health and self-sufficiency. In a region reporting 26 percent malnutrition, indigenous crops such as iron-rich African leafy vegetables and the drought-resistant legume the bambara nut represent an untapped source of valuable micronutrients, as well as a way to strengthen local ecosystems and livelihoods.”

“SINGI has taken this knowledge into the field, pioneering a Farmer Business School Model and training 4 000 local farmers on best business practices and sustainable agricultural techniques, with an emphasis on cultivating nutritious local crops. This has included a Direct Procurement Model – currently being tested for scaling up in other regions – granting farmers exclusive, profitable contracts for indigenous produce at 13 schools while serving healthier meals to an estimated 5 000 students. SINGI has also established school gardens, organized field days, conducted sustainability education events, and involved the wider community and policymakers through traditional food fairs.”

“Through the BFN Project, SINGI’s contributions have an impact beyond Busia County; for example, supplying evidence for Kenya’s updated Food Composition Table, which now displays 522 species including many local varieties. SINGI’s work was instrumental in influencing policymakers to endorse Busia’s first Biodiversity Conservation Policy (2018), a landmark success that has generated interest in other counties to adopt similar measures.”

4.2. Subsidies and incentives

Governments can provide subsidies to support the production of positive externalities by agriculture, such as the Payment for Ecosystem Services scheme and incentives, as tax reduction, or impose regulations, fees or taxes to limit negative externalities by agriculture, such as nutrient leaching or erosion. These types of support can be quite beneficial to organic and family farmers who typically implement these environmental practices. Possible agri-environmental subsidies or incentives may include measures for:

- ▶ extensively managed grasslands;
- ▶ stabilization of crop rotation;

- ▶ preserving hedges, woodlands and other biodiversity-rich areas on the farm;
- ▶ using endangered breeds or local varieties;
- ▶ erosion control;
- ▶ animal welfare practices, including providing sufficient space in livestock housing;
- ▶ particular environmental protection areas like national parks, water-sensitive areas, etc.;
- ▶ use of catch crops or green manure.

The complexity and multiplicity of agri-environmental support measures can be a problem for smallholders and family farmers as it can be challenging to go through the application bureaucracy necessary to obtain these subsidies and incentives or even to access information on all the possibilities of subsidies and incentives. This can also lead to significant administrative costs for the government. It may be more efficient, from a societal cost point of view, to use multitarget policy instruments instead of using too many different agri-environmental subsidies.

Good practice: Combining subsidies for small farmers with training in agroecology in Mexico

Production for Wellbeing is one of the strategic programmes included in the Government of Mexico's National Development Plan 2019–2024 (Bartra Verges *et al.*, 2022). It consists of the delivery of direct support in favour of small and medium-scale producers and its objective is to provide liquidity to these producers so that they invest in labour, inputs and services related to the production of the field. The resources seek to boost production and productivity through sustainability, with a comprehensive vision that involves soil restoration, the independence of the producer with respect to transnational seed and agrochemical companies, the restoration of soil health and the offer of healthy foods for producing families and for the entire population. As of May 2022, 1 767 000 producers working on less than 20 hectares had been supported, with an investment of MXN 14 billion.

The Production for Wellbeing programme has implemented a technical support strategy since October 2019 with the purpose of strengthening and expanding the capacities and skills of these producers around organizational processes, agroecological practices, articulation of public policies, agrobiodiversity, and education and training. This aim is to support the transition to a sustainable production system and a resilient and competitive food sector. The strategy is being implemented by 603 technicians with a social vocation, agroecological knowledge, who live in rural and indigenous territories in order to work at ground level. In these territories, 2 310 field schools have been established and 114 000 producers have participated in training processes, while 60 000 producers are carrying out agroecological practices as a result of this training and support.

Good practice: Direct payments to support organic and agroecology in the European Union

The European Union's Common Agricultural Policy 2023–2027 aims to ensure a sustainable future for European farmers, to provide more targeted support to smaller farms, and to allow greater flexibility for EU countries to adapt measures to local conditions. It is a key tool in achieving the ambitions of the EU Farm to Fork strategy (European Commission, n.d.-b), which seeks to mitigate climate change and adapt to its impacts, to reverse the loss of biodiversity, to ensure food security, nutrition and public health, and to preserve affordability of food while generating fairer economic returns. The Farm to Fork strategy has set a target of 25 percent of agricultural land to be farmed organically by 2030.

The Common Agricultural Policy 2023–2017 has set aside at least 25 percent of the budget for direct payments for allocation to eco-schemes, providing incentives for climate- and environment-friendly farming practices and approaches (such as organic farming, agroecology, carbon farming, etc.) as well as animal welfare improvements (European Commission, n.d.-c). Since the 1990s, direct payments to farmers to convert and maintain organic farming have been part of agri-environmental measures in EU countries. This has played an important role in the huge increase in the size of land managed via organic practices, which increased from 1 million hectares in 1994 to 17.8 million in 2021 (Willer, Schlatter and Trávníček, 2023) involving 440 360 producers.

Good practice: Public policy for peasant, family and community agriculture in Colombia

Colombia's *Resolution No. 464 of 2017* details ten axes to strengthen the social, economic and political capacities of families, communities and organizations, through rural development with a territorial approach that improves the sustainability of agricultural production and improves the livelihoods of the rural population. Axis 5, "Sustainable productive systems," includes the promotion of agroecological practices and knowledge, PGS, and strengthening the use and conservation of farmers' seeds (Creole and native).

Good practice: Grants for small farmers in Argentina

The Family Farming on the Move programme is an initiative to support small farmers in Argentina (Argentina Government of Buenos Aires Province, n.d.). This programme of the Ministry of Agrarian Development of Buenos Aires Province started in 2022, giving rise to the financing of local projects, with individual subsidies of about ARS 400 000 and up to ARS 5 million for organizations. Among the objectives of this programme is to encourage the promotion of food production with an agroecological approach. Therefore, priority is given to projects that include producers registered with the Register of Agroecological Producers of the MDA.

Summary of recommendations

This section provides recommendations concerning the clustering of pro-agroecological and organic policies and actions for family farmers into comprehensive plans. It is worth putting the support into a broader context, showing that agroecological and organic development is not the goal in itself, but rather a tool to reach broader policy goals.

The involvement of family farmers and their organizations is a crucial condition for the development of good policies to support agroecology and organic agriculture, and for their successful implementation. Family farmers have to be involved in the entire process: policy design and formulation, decision-making, implementation and evaluation.

Isolated policies can have limited and short-lived results. It is more beneficial therefore to develop an action plan, choosing the right mix of appropriate, cost-effective policy measures for a given context and developing a strategic plan that can provide an objective-based framework for organizing and integrating measures to support agroecological and organic development.

Developing a comprehensive national/regional action plan takes time and resources. However, it is a worthwhile exercise, given that such plans:

- ▶ create and catalyse a positive dynamic around agroecology and organic agriculture development;
- ▶ encourage an analytical starting point, looking at and addressing the domestic situation rather than trying to replicate the policy blueprints of other countries;
- ▶ encourage policymakers to adopt a more comprehensive and strategic approach, rather than discussing single policy measures in isolation;
- ▶ provide the framework for constructive public–private cooperation and organized stakeholder involvement in policy formulation;
- ▶ constitute a clear government-supported statement and long-term commitment in favour of agroecology and organic farming, which motivates family farmers' investments.

A strategic action plan should involve different government ministries and agencies, building councils at national and regional level. One government agency (typically the agriculture ministry) should serve as the lead agency on the planning and representatives from other relevant agencies should be assigned to the process. Family farmers' organizations and agroecological and organic farmers' organizations should be represented in these councils at national and local level. The action plan will require suitable budget allocations, and coherence with other national policies and action plans that concern the agriculture sector and/or rural development.

The action plan should contain a balancing mix of measures that progressively promote production and consumption, avoiding stimulating production without a market exit or, conversely, stimulating demand that does not find products to meet it. For example, measures to support family farmers to adopt agroecological and organic practices, such

as subsidies or access to resources, should be accompanied, as production grows, by measures to support the introduction of agroecological and organic products in school canteens, starting with the products available at local level, and/or measures to increase public awareness and to facilitate access to local markets. It would be beneficial to put into practice at the same time enabling measures to strengthen organic and agroecological farmers' organizations, as networks and cooperatives, and to develop PGS.

Local policymakers can do much to encourage and support organic agriculture and agroecology for family farming. They can institute public policies from a territorial dimension, taking advantage of the particularity of a certain region, such as through origin-linked quality certification (e.g. Geographic Indications) or schemes like Globally Important Agriculture Heritage Sites (GIAHS). These might combine touristic or environmental aspects (nature protection, eco-tourism, local consumption, etc.), linking agroecological and organic family farmers to the other stakeholders at the local level by establishing local organic and agroecological farmers' markets and shops, including the local organic and agroecological products into the local school canteens, or/and building biodistricts or eco-regions.

Policy design and implementation should always be done in a multistakeholder approach, with family farmers' organizations in the central role. Most of the organic and agroecological expertise, as well as the motivation and energy to advance the sector, lie with the private sector, composed of producers, companies and NGOs working on agroecology and organic agriculture on a daily basis. A particular challenge for policymaking is that the concept of organic farming and agroecology does not belong to government to modify and adapt at will. Both concepts, building upon indigenous and peasant traditional knowledge and on modern ecology, were developed by producers, interested individuals and civil society organizations in the twentieth century and subsequently sustained by consumers through special markets, particularly since the 1970s. The concepts of agroecology and organic agriculture have also been developed in the supranational sphere.

The risk of exclusion by the local farming community is still a factor for many family farmers considering converting to organic and agroecological farming. Family farmers' organic and agroecological associations play a vital role in offering a community in which organic and agroecological farmers can feel a sense of belonging and interact with their peers. These organizations are also critical for fostering knowledge exchange and co-creation, given that these approaches are very intensive and require context-specific knowledge. They are also vital for supporting the development of dedicated market outlets. Government support for organic and agroecological associations, cooperatives and networks is therefore connected to policy aims to convert more family producers and land to organic and agroecological farming.

Although the concepts may now be increasingly controlled by public institutions through regulations, the stakeholder involvement and ownership is critical to maintaining integrity, and is a part of good practice in policy development and implementation. Government can also have much more leverage and effectiveness in the implementation of organic and agroecological support measures if it relies on existing structures, and on the expertise of the farmers and other sector stakeholders.

The long-term efficacy of policy measures does not depend only on the relevance of each measure taken in isolation. The right package of measures, and the reliability of and trust in government support, can have an even bigger impact on the sector's development than the amount of resources invested. Accurate data and deep understanding of the current situation of agroecology and organic agriculture and their context are essential before engaging in a policy process.

Effective communication of the supporting policies is important for future success. It is a strong positive policy signal to create public awareness around the consumption of organic and agroecological products.

The decision to shift to organic or agroecological practices may arise in response to public advocacy, often related to public (especially children's) health and safety. The policy decision may often be framed as prohibiting the use of synthetic pesticides, which addresses a main health concern. However, it is recommended that policymakers go further than simply prohibiting synthetic pesticides and adopt the systems approach of agroecological and organic management, taking into account all land-management objectives and practices, including soil fertility and nutrient management, as well as pest control.

For school canteens, it is recommended that an incremental approach be adopted to increasing the proportion of organic products on the menu each year (starting with the easiest products), in order to give time for suppliers to adapt and plan their production. A preliminary analysis of the organic products available in the locality, including their seasonality and available quantities, can assist in planning the menus and the tender.

Governments should also review the agriculture and food policies that can have negative impacts on agroecological and organic development, such as subsidies on chemical fertilizers or synthetic pesticides.

In recent years, some governments have designed comprehensive strategic plans that integrate different policies to support organic agriculture and agroecology, as suggested in these recommendations. These are interesting and encouraging paths, and the results will be seen in the coming years. Two examples of this direction are given below.

Building a crosscutting strategy in the United Republic of Tanzania

The United Republic of Tanzania has introduced the National Ecological Organic Agriculture Strategy (NEOAS), a pioneering move on the continent (United Republic of Tanzania Ministry of Agriculture, 2022; Tanzania Daily News, 2022). The strategy seeks to improve livelihood and income of smallholder farmers through coordinated support to the ecological organic agriculture value chain. The key goals of this strategy include:

- ▶ facilitating the shift of farmers to agroecology by incorporating insights from both research and indigenous knowledge;
- ▶ enhancing availability, accessibility and utilization of land, as well as appropriate farm machineries (tools, equipment and implements) for organic farming and agroecology;
- ▶ establishing a sustainable inputs sector with viable alternatives to the expensive importation of pesticides, seeds and fertilizers;
- ▶ enhancing capacity of institutions for research, training and extension systems in developing and disseminating appropriate technologies and practices;
- ▶ cultivating robust supply chains and markets, both locally and globally, for organic and agroecological products;
- ▶ promoting women and youth empowerment in the strategy implementation;
- ▶ enhancing the capacity of civil society organizations to play a pivotal role in advancing these transitions;
- ▶ providing support for financing, monitoring, coordination, and evaluation of the strategy.

Additionally, the Government of the United Republic of Tanzania has committed to integrating organics and agroecology as a pervasive policy initiative in the forthcoming national biodiversity strategy (NBSAP). The strategy serves as an invitation to donor partner nations to contribute to the initiatives outlined, forming part of a broader, coordinated endeavour. In October 2023, the Ministry of Agriculture engaged in a dialogue with numerous international funders during a donor convening organized by the Agroecology Coalition. Following the lead of the United Republic of Tanzania, other countries have or are also developing their National Agroecology Strategy (NAS). Kenya for instance adopted their National Agroecology Strategy for Food System Transformation 2024-2033 (NAS) last 28 November. Uganda and Zambia' agroecology strategy are also well underway.

A roadmap towards modernization and agroecology in Cambodia

In response to the imperative shift towards sustainable agriculture, the Government of Cambodia has demonstrated a tangible commitment to advancing conservation agriculture, sustainable intensification, and agroecology. This commitment is manifested in the establishment of Cambodia Conservation Agriculture Sustainable Intensification (CASIC), an intergovernmental and multistakeholder platform officially established under the leadership of the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry, and Fisheries in 2020 and governed by a Steering Committee chaired by the ministry, with members from the Ministry of Interior, the Ministry of Environment, the Ministry of Women's Affairs, the Ministry of Water Resources and Meteorology, and the Cambodia Chamber of Commerce.

The overarching objective of CASIC's platform is to enhance coordination and provide support to stakeholders, fostering the promotion of conservation agriculture and sustainable intensification towards agricultural modernization and agroecology in Cambodia and Southeast Asia.

It catalyses a wider adoption of conservation agriculture, sustainable intensification and agroecology innovative approaches and techniques as a platform, with the aim of coordinating and supporting research for development; investing in knowledge management; creating an enabling environment for policy dialogues and public-private partnerships; value creation; and exploring market opportunities and enhance collaboration between various stakeholders in conservation agriculture, sustainable intensification, and agroecology. Although it was initiated and it is government led, it has recently opened up to family farmers' organizations and civil society organizations.

To streamline priorities and operational procedures within CASIC, a roadmap towards modernization and agroecology spanning 2022–2026 has been drafted (CASIC, 2021). Developed with technical and financial support from Swisscontact and the French Agricultural Research Centre for International Development (CIRAD), this roadmap is designed to align with national development goals and priorities. It thereby contributes to realizing the key policies and strategies of the Government of Cambodia, particularly those related to sustainable agriculture development, combating land degradation, biodiversity conservation, and climate change adaptation and mitigation.



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FAO. 2025. *Policies to support organic agriculture and agroecology in the framework of the United Nations Decade of Family Farming 2019–2028*. Rome. <https://doi.org/10.4060/cd4230en>

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