

SUB-NATIONAL POLICIES FOR AGROECOLOGICAL TRANSITIONS

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IN THIS BRIEF



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WHY SUB-NATIONAL POLICY MATTERS?



SUB-NATIONAL GOVERNMENTS AS DRIVERS OF AGROECOLOGICAL TRANSFORMATION

Over the last decade, particularly since 2018, during which the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) published his 10 Elements of Agroecology, there has been a significant increase in **local, national, and regional agroecology strategies, policies and legislation** ([see here](#)). Through regional initiatives such as the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) Policy Guidelines on agroecology transitions, the Latin American and Caribbean Parliament (PARLATINO) Model Law on Agroecology, and National Agroecology Strategies (NAS), governments are increasingly recognizing agroecology as a strategic approach for food systems transformation. NAS provide overarching policy frameworks that strengthen and align food systems policies while identifying priority interventions to accelerate agroecological transitions. Grounded in the 13 Principles (CFS HLPE, 2019) and the 10 Elements (FAO, 2019) of Agroecology, they support multiple development objectives, including improved nutrition security, climate resilience, biodiversity conservation, sustainable water and soil management, enhanced farmer livelihoods, empowerment and governance quality.

Yet, agroecology does not happen in a national ministry, nor in a policy document, or strategy paper, however well-written. Agroecology is ultimately implemented locally, on a farm, on a hillside, in a market. It happens in a landscape, in a food system, in a community. **Farms, landscapes, municipalities and regions are where farmers produce food and regenerate ecosystems, and where policies are translated into action.** The level of governance closest to those places is rarely the national level, but rather the regional, provincial, county, or municipal level. Sub-national governments, policies, and strategies therefore play a critical role in turning national ambitions into tangible outcomes.

This brief therefore explored how subnational governments have become key drivers of agroecological transitions by creating enabling environments, supporting farmers and connecting national strategies with local implementation.



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WHY SUB-NATIONAL POLICY MATTERS?



- **Proximity to practice:** Local governments, municipalities, districts, counties, are embedded in the territories where agroecological transitions take place, and understand local ecosystems, food systems and community priorities.
- **Regulatory and institutional leverage:** They hold competences over the relevant instruments to agroecological transitions (e.g. land-use planning, water management, extension services, market regulations, and public procurement).
- **Innovation laboratories:** Many pioneering agroecology policies begin at the municipal or regional level before influencing national policy.
- **Bridge for implementation:** National agroecology strategies need champions and require local governments to translate their ambition into concrete action, although they often need greater resources, stable staff and technical support.
- **Multiple policy entry points:** The subnational level offers multiple entry points to promote agroecological transitions, which is more durable than a single thematic policy (e.g. climate adaptation plans, school feeding and public food procurement programmes, biodiversity corridor and watershed protection strategies, local sustainable development plans, tourism development strategies and integrated landscape management plans).

The relationship between the sub-national and national levels should be bidirectional and dynamic. Local initiatives can demonstrate feasibility of new approaches, help generate the evidence base, build political legitimacy, and sometimes fuel the public demand that pushes national governments to act.

Local champions also enable structured dialogues with local farmer organizations, and set up multi-stakeholder platforms including farmers, to discuss policy issues with state/national policymakers and advance agroecology integration in all relevant programmes. But the reverse is equally important: national frameworks, once adopted, can create powerful incentives, coordination mechanisms and foster convergence of public resources towards local agroecological action.



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This brief is a summary of a deep-dive webinar organized by the Agroecology Coalition Working Groups on Policies and on Implementation attended by 100 participants. During the webinar, four cases were presented from Sicily, Catalonia, Catubig, and Nakuru (from pages 5 to 8). The following sections on policies, finance, markets and integrated territorial landscape development (from pages 9 to 13) summarize the key insights that emerged from four thematic group discussions held during the webinar.

FOUR CASES, FOUR PERSPECTIVES



SICILY, ITALY – REGIONAL LEGISLATION AS AN ENABLING FRAMEWORK

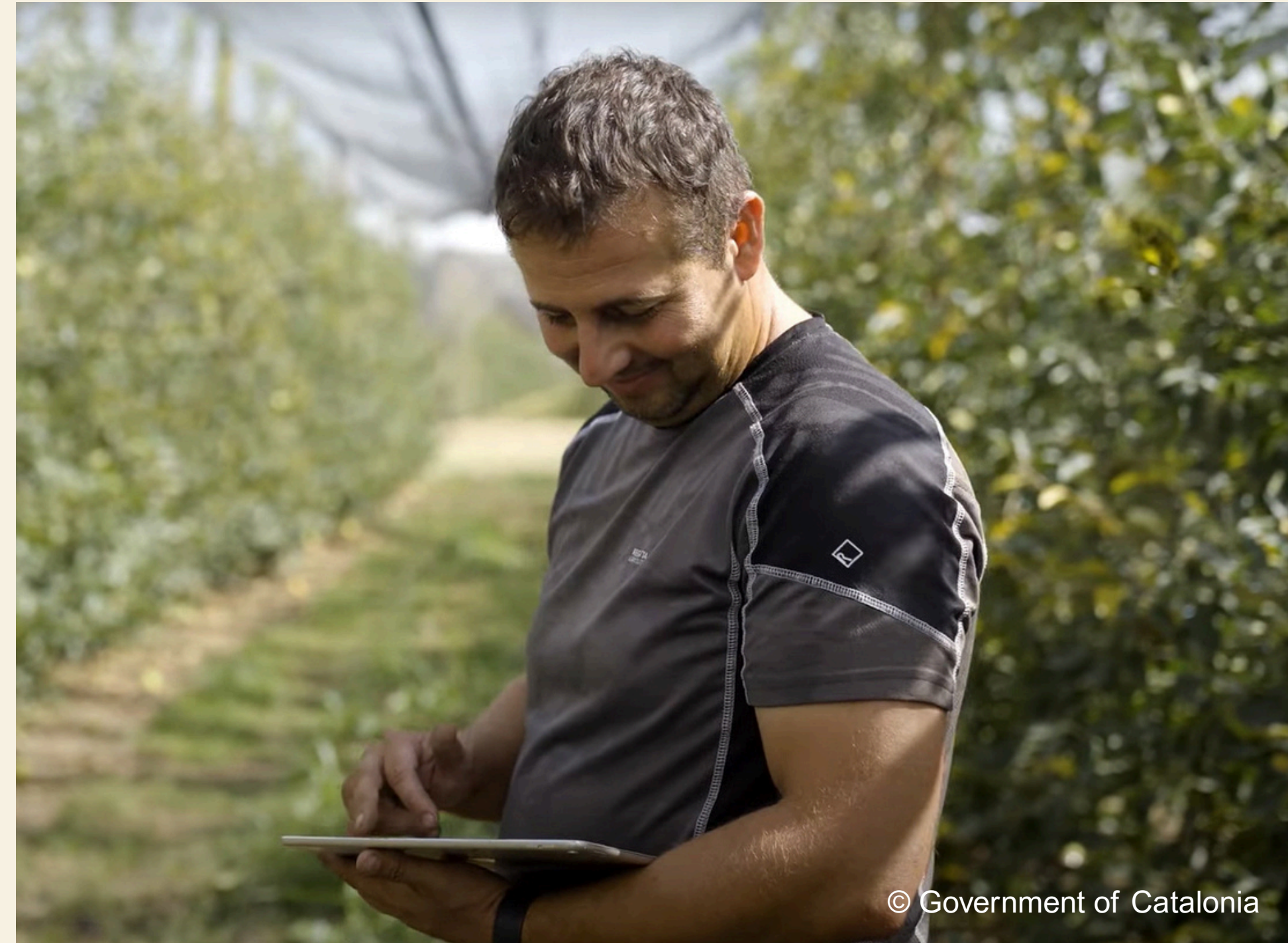
- Building on the network of biodistricts and the strong organic movement (Coordinamento Agroecologia Sicilia) in the region, **Sicily adopted the Regional Law 21/2021, one of Europe's first integrated agroecology laws**, made possible by the region's autonomous legislative powers and special statute.
- The law positions agroecology as a response to the interconnected climate, biodiversity and social crises, aligning with the 2030 Agenda, the European Green Deal, the Farm to Fork Strategy and the EU Biodiversity Strategy.
- The legislation was built on scientific evidence demonstrating the greater energy efficiency, circularity and net primary productivity of agroecological systems compared with conventional agriculture. This evidence also informed the law's implementing guidelines and decrees.
- Sicily's experience, recognised in the [FAO AgroecologyLex](#) database, demonstrates how **regional governments can serve as policy innovators, inspiring similar legislative processes** in other Italian regions such as Abruzzo and Puglia.
- The case highlighted the importance of embedding **agroecology as a long-term cultural transformation**, with the regional law also serving as the foundation for initiatives such as the Mediterranean Agroecology Congress.

FOUR CASES, FOUR PERSPECTIVES



CATALONIA, SPAIN – USING INCENTIVES AND CERTIFICATION TO REWARD SUSTAINABLE FARMING

- Catalonia has integrated agriculture, biodiversity and climate action through its **Sustainable Agrarian Production (SAP) programme**, supported by the 2020 Climate Change Law and the Nature Heritage Fund.
- The SAP certification system assesses farms against environmental and social criteria, including greenhouse gas emissions, biodiversity, soil management, local seed use and labour conditions, recognising different stages of farmers' sustainability transitions.
- Farmers achieving the highest certification levels benefit from fiscal incentives, preferential access to grants and public procurement, biodiversity and carbon credits, and reduced administrative requirements.
- The programme combines technical support with incentives, helping farmers improve their practices while increasing the visibility and market recognition of sustainable production.
- Catalonia's experience illustrates how **environmental and agricultural policies can be integrated to make agroecology a mainstream pathway for regional development rather than a niche approach.**



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FOUR CASES, FOUR PERSPECTIVES



CATUBIG, PHILIPPINES – MUNICIPAL LEADERSHIP DRIVING ORGANIC AGRICULTURE

- Since 2017, **the municipality of Catubig has pursued a 100% organic agriculture strategy**, motivated by the need to protect soil health, improve public health and reduce dependence on synthetic fertilisers and pesticides.
- The transition was inspired by exchanges with other organic municipalities and **supported by the national Organic Agriculture Act, Participatory Guarantee Systems (PGS) and other national programmes**, while also exposing gaps in national implementation.
- Local leaders promoted farmer self-reliance by encouraging farmers to produce their own agricultural inputs, making the municipality less vulnerable to input price volatility and geopolitical shocks.
- Catubig strengthened its influence through **the League of Organic Agriculture Municipalities, Cities and Provinces (LOAMCP)**, using this network of municipalities to advocate for stronger national support, appropriate farm implements machinery and greater recognition of local organic initiatives.
- The case demonstrated how municipalities can act as a bridge between national policy and local implementation, showing that strong local political leadership can accelerate agroecological transitions even in resource-constrained contexts.

FOUR CASES, FOUR PERSPECTIVES



NAKURU COUNTY, KENYA – PARTICIPATORY GOVERNANCE FOR POLICY IMPLEMENTATION

- **Nakuru County developed its Agroecology Policy in 2025** in response to climate change, land degradation, pesticide dependence, persistent malnutrition and the growing recognition of agroecology as a pathway for sustainable food systems. The county has just concluded the Implementation, Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning framework that will guide implementation for the next five years.
- The policy emerged through close collaboration between county government, civil society organisations, farmers, researchers and development partners, alongside extensive political engagement with county decision-makers.
- Two dedicated governance structures were established to guide implementation: the **County Multi-Stakeholder Platform (MSP)**, bringing together government, farmers, researchers, civil society, the private sector and development partners, and the **County Technical Agroecology Committee (CTAC)**, providing technical coordination and integrating agroecology across county programmes.
- Nakuru County drew on lessons from other counties for the elaboration of the policy, adapting proven approaches to its own context, thereby demonstrating the value of peer learning and knowledge exchange.
- Strategies for the institutionalization and scaling up of agroecology in Nakuru County are through integration into county planning and budgeting, strengthening extension and farmer capacity, promoting agroecology in school feeding programmes, and enhancing the participation of youth and women.
- The experience highlighted that **sustained multiactor collaboration, political commitment, inclusive stakeholder engagement and institutional coordination are critical for translating agroecology into policy**, which enables long-term action for resilience and environmental conservation.
- Future priorities for strengthening the county agroecology ecosystem include mapping agroecology innovations and enterprises, documenting indigenous knowledge, generating and sharing evidence, and fostering strategic partnerships to support sustainable implementation.

I. Sub-national Policies Supporting Agroecology



OPPORTUNITIES

- Multi-stakeholder platforms are valuable mechanisms for coordination and collaboration across actors, sectors and levels of government. To advance place-based agroecological food systems, such platforms are particularly critical at municipal or landscape level.
- The understanding of agroecology can be embraced from very different perspectives / entry points.
- Women are leading the transition towards agroecology because their knowledge, labour and leadership sustain the diverse farms, local food cultures, seed systems and community institutions on which resilient food systems depend. Supportive agroecology policies can strengthen their rights, resources and decision-making power, while social movements such as those in Brazil show that agroecology and gender justice are closely linked.
- Agroecology policy can be built on existing network of regional / provincial stakeholders and ongoing initiatives.

STRATEGIES

Participants of the webinar shared the following example:

- In Sicily, the agroecology transition builds upon the existing biodistricts.
- The [National Agroecology Strategy in Kenya](#) (2024) is mandating Regional Authority to develop Regional Agroecology Policy in counties.
- The National School Feeding Program (PNAE) is a very important program supporting farmers to transition towards agroecology in Brazil, by creating and stimulating demand for agroecological produce.
- Leadership from local communities was very important in Himachal Pradesh (India) to give voice to a bottom up process that led to policy in 2018.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Agroecology policies are strongest when developed through **participatory, bottom-up processes**.
- Farmers, women, Indigenous Peoples, civil society and local governments should be involved, from policy design through implementation, monitoring, evaluation, learning (MEL) and review, through meaningful and well-facilitated **multistakeholder processes**.
- **National strategies should create enabling overarching frameworks** that demand and support technically and financially local adaptation.
- **Raise awareness and build capacities at all levels**, from farmers, extension workers, CSOs, academia, government officials and policymakers, for a holistic understanding of agroecology as a pathway to landscape-based food systems.
- **Connect strongly to the already existing elements** such as traditional practices, indigenous breeds, local food cultures, preservation techniques, rainwater harvesting, springshed management, homestead gardens, local markets, weave them together, strengthen them by collaborating and demonstrate together how practical implementation looks like.

II. Financing Agroecological Transitions

OPPORTUNITIES

- Funding for agroecology can be included in regional and territorial initiatives for agroecological infrastructures such as water basins, restoration of landscape features, and biodiversity corridors.
- Strengthening public investment in agroecology through tax-funded programmes developed in partnership with farmers.
- Philanthropic and development partner investments can be aligned with subnational policies and strategies in agroecology.
- The true cost of food can be incorporated into pricing and incentive systems, alongside payments for ecosystem services.
- Supporting the entire agroecological value chain beyond the farm gate, including processing, marketing, distribution, market access and food services.

STRATEGIES

Participants of the webinar shared the following example:

- Regenerative & Agroecological Food Systems Transitions (RAFT): territorially-based financing coordination mechanism with philanthropies, operating for instance in Murang'a County in Kenya, and in three territories in Brazil.
- Public funding is the biggest source of available funding. Like in the case of Catalonia, Spain, public funding can effectively direct farmers to work towards environmental and social outcomes. It is high time that all public finance mandatorily produces not just economic, but also strong environmental and social outcomes.
- The Middle East has big climate issues, and so farmers are successful in asking governments to provide a lot of support to secure water, build capacity on soil health and generate carbon credits.



RECOMMENDATIONS

- **Integrate agroecology into existing government plans, budgets and schemes** and converge that money for agroecology implementation.
- **Repurpose harmful subsidies**, away from promoting synthetic fertilizers and pesticides to incentives and training promoting agroecological food systems.
- **Pilot innovative financing models**: for instance, proximity to farmers is easier to demonstrate measurable impacts, build trust, and attract further investment.
- **Use blended finance approaches**, combining public funding, philanthropy and private investment, that can effectively support territorial agroecology initiatives, as illustrated by landscape-based financing mechanisms such as RAFT via Consortium for Agroecological Transformations in India.
- Go beyond financial support and pair incentives with context-specific technical advisory services, farmer-to-farmer exchanges and capacity building to help farmers adopt agroecological practices, access markets and link with consumers, schools, retail, tourism.
- **Incentives should be tied to the generation of public goods**, including ecosystem services, biodiversity conservation, healthy soils, water, climate resilience, nutrition, household dietary diversity, empowerment and governance quality, while supporting farmers throughout the transition.
- **Emerging market mechanism** (e.g. carbon and biodiversity finance) offer new opportunities but must be designed to ensure that benefits are shared equitably, with a significant share of revenues reaching farmers and local communities.
- Agroecology financing should **reduce dependence on external inputs and strengthen farmers' autonomy**, rather than creating new dependencies on agribusiness or volatile markets.
- **Addressing power imbalances across food value chains** is essential, ensuring that producers receive a fair share of the value created through agroecological products and ecosystem services.
- **Financing models must be adapted to local contexts**, particularly in regions facing structural constraints, such as Small Island Developing States, where limited market access requires tailored approaches.
- Overall, **successful financing for agroecology requires a combination of enabling policies, blended investment, appropriate incentives and fair market mechanisms** that recognize the true value of agroecological production while strengthening farmer resilience.

III. Agroecological Markets and Value Chains



OPPORTUNITIES

- Public procurement and institutional markets can create stable demand for agroecological products while improving access to healthy food.
- Cooperatives and other collective market structures can strengthen market access, aggregation, and distribution for agroecological producers.
- Consumer awareness, product visibility, and locally adapted certification systems such as Participatory Guarantee Systems (PGS) can increase demand for agroecological products.
- Dedicated market spaces can better accommodate the diversity of agroecological production systems and value chains.

STRATEGIES

Participants of the webinar shared the following examples:

- In Costa Rica, a law establishes a subsidy scheme for certified organic farmers. A next step would be to incentivize consumers.
- In India, the state government in Himachal Pradesh procures Natural farming produce with a Minimum Support Price.
- In the Philippines, a national law has been passed allowing government agencies and local government units to procure agricultural produce and products directly from farmers, relaxing typically stringent procurement requirements. This effectively cuts out the middleman, meaning farmers stand to earn more, while the government pays less than it typically would.
- In Haiti, the World Food Programme and other school feeding programs are bridging the diversity of smallholder agroecological farmers with the predictable need for purchasing certain crops.
- In the Kenyan county of Nakuru, the government is facilitating marketing of products through cooperatives.

- In Brazil, efforts are made to guarantee a percentage of institutional market access to smallholder agroecological farmers and public procurement of produce from the landless farmers movement. PLANAPO 2013-2015 (first cycle of PNAPO implementation) assisted 5,300 municipalities to spend 30% or more of their school meal programme budget on purchases of organic and agroecological products from family farmers (some municipalities even reach 100%).
- In India, a multi-state cooperative (National Cooperative Organics Limited) was formed by combining leading national cooperative organizations, including NDDB, NAFED, GCMF (Amul), NCCF, and NCDC with around 11,000 cooperatives joining the organization.



RECOMMENDATIONS

Creating demand for agroecological products requires both supply- and demand-side policies. Key priorities included:

- **Strengthen public procurement and other institutional purchasing mechanisms** to create stable and predictable markets for agroecological producers.
- **Design market mechanisms that accommodate the diversity of agroecological production systems** while meeting the needs of institutional and commercial buyers.
- **Invest in market infrastructure and collective marketing models** for agroecological products, including cooperatives, aggregation, and distribution systems.
- **Increase consumer awareness** through communication, labelling, and locally adapted certification systems such as PGS to strengthen recognition and demand.
- **Food labelling** can play an important role in promoting agroecological products and enhancing consumption of healthier products.

IV. Sub-national policies for integrated territorial and landscape development can advance the agroecology transition

OPPORTUNITIES

- **Agroecology as a pathway to landscape-based food systems can meet multiple objectives**, including climate change mitigation and adaptation; nutrition improvement; biodiversity, ecosystem and watershed protection, and sustainable economic development. Agroecology can thus play a central role in advancing integrated territorial and landscape development strategies.
- **Existing sub-national policies and programs thus offer multiple entry points for agroecological transitions, beyond those labelled as agroecology.** These may be multi-sector development strategies for climate change adaptation, sustainable territorial development, or integrated landscape management (such as FAO's Participatory Informed Landscape Approach, PILA); or specific programs for school feeding, food procurement, a biodiversity corridor, watershed protection, or market diversification. In such cases, the driving force might have been a multi-stakeholder landscape (territorial, bioregional, indigenous) coalition; a farmer or producer organization; a food system coalition; or a network of municipalities working together across administrative boundaries.
- **Parliamentarians at regional and local levels can also play a critical role** as champions, as bridge-builders between executive and legislative processes, and as connectors between constituency concerns and broader policy agendas.
- **The development, advancement and governance of sub-national agroecological transitions** is thus often more plural and collaborative, more hybrid, and more creative than many imagine.
- **Many such initiatives are working in the direction of agroecology more narrowly**, promoting agroecological practices and some market linkages, but not in a comprehensive manner as a pathway to landscape-based food systems.
- **Agroecology can serve as a 'connector' to align those programmes, actors, sectors and governance levels around common outcomes**, linking stakeholders, sectors and administrative levels around shared food system and landscape outcomes, including soil health, water availability, biodiversity, dietary diversity, nutrition, farm income stability, resilience, producer share of final value, empowerment, inclusion and governance quality.

STRATEGIES

During the webinar, participation shared the following examples:

- In Argentina, the Rosario Urban Agriculture Program led to two decades of relationship between the municipality and farmer organizations turning underused public and private land into productive agroecological farms, building markets and trade fairs to connect growers directly with consumers, and expanding training into schools and community programs.
- In Colombia, a farmer cooperative launched the Sacred Sierra initiative, using landscape partnership strategies to advance agroecology production and markets.
- In Ecuador, forest and biodiversity rainforest conservation programs are promoting integrated landscape strategies to scale up use of agroecological/agroforestry practices.
- In India, in 10 cotton-growing areas, the Madhya Pradesh State is co-implementing the Regenerative Production Landscape Collaborative with farmer organizations, local governments, civil society and corporations, to foster agricultural ecosystems and diversified product market that conserve and enhance natural resources and build community resilience while enabling businesses to source responsibly.
- In Kenya, dozens of local landscape partnerships in ecosystems across the country have joined in the [Kenya Landscape Actors Platform](#) (KenLAP), endorsed by the Ministry of Environment. The Platform's members are promoting agroecological practices as a priority intervention for land and livelihood restoration.
- In Madagascar, coordinated territorial planning in Antananarivo to address urban and peri-urban food and environmental insecurity became an important vehicle for promoting agroecology.
- In Mexico, the indigenous-led Sierra Gorda Biosphere Reserve Alliance in Querétaro developed a climate change mitigation and adaptation strategy prioritizing agroecological development.
- In Nigeria, FAO's Participatory Informed Landscape Approach (PILA) supports governments and stakeholders in Ondo and Cross River States to co-design integrated landscape management plans, using agroecology as a strategy to transform food systems and achieve multiple sustainability objectives.

- In Peru, the San Martin Region's Low-Emissions Rural Development Strategy is promoting landscape transformation through agroecological practices in many of the region's crop, livestock and tree production systems.
- In the Philippines, the Filipino League of Organic Municipalities Cities and Provinces (LOAMCP) unites local chief executives to champion sustainable farming, food sovereignty, and climate resilience, to drive the grassroots implementation of the National Organic Agriculture Act and empower communities.
- In the U.S.A., multi-stakeholder platforms co-organized with state governments in five states developed integrated strategies for rural development, agriculture, water quality and nutrition that are promoting regenerative agriculture practices and market support.
- In Zimbabwe, the Ramsar Convention implementation is supporting better connections between local agricultural practitioners and local government authorities.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- **Explore and embrace the potential for farmer and agroecology organizations to partner with other sectors to advance the agroecological transition**
- Seek out allies from outside the agriculture sector such as climate, environment, health, nutrition, consumer associations, rural or urban development, who value agroecology for its contributions to those goals. Often they can also contribute to the success of agroecology (e.g., ensure stewardship of ecosystems on which farmers depend).
- Serve as a connector between the Ministry of Agriculture and other Ministries, who can jointly advance agroecological food systems.
- Build bridges between the agroecology movement and movements for integrated landscape and territorial development, for mutual exchange of practices, joint training (agriculture, environment, health, et al), financing strategies and policy support.
- **Embed agroecology within subnational legal, policy and planning frameworks on climate change, watershed management, territorial management, forest, biodiversity, nutrition, rural development or local development plans**
- Advocate for integrated landscape policy and planning to promote agroecology.
- Advocate for a dedicated, adequately mandated **cross-sector coordination mechanism** for agroecological landscape or territorial governance.
- Ensure meaningful participation, leadership and decision-making influence of youth, women, Indigenous Peoples and other marginalized groups, together with their organizations in processes to develop and implement integrated agroecological landscape and territorial plans and programs

- **Promote the use and strengthen capacities for inclusive, participatory and spatially explicit planning, decision-making, and implementation process.**
- Strengthen capacities of agroecology leaders and government officials in cross-sector coordination, decision-making, facilitation and capacity-building to enable agroecology to function as a “connector” across stakeholders, sectors and administrative levels.
- Build capacities of agroecology leaders and government officials to co-design policies and interventions with other sectors, support local governments in setting up multi-stakeholder platforms, and help them to understand the opportunities of agroecology and synergies with other objectives in the landscape.
- Strengthen skills and capacities of local municipalities, government officials, and landscape leaders for effective coordination, monitoring and accountability arrangements around agroecology.
- **Redesign monitoring and accountability systems to assess agroecology through shared food system and multifunctional landscape outcomes**
- Strengthen Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (MEL) and move MEL focus of all relevant programmes, stakeholders, sectors and administrative levels from output-orientation towards shared food system and landscape outcomes, including soil health, water availability, biodiversity, dietary diversity, nutrition, farm income stability, resilience, producer share of final value, empowerment, inclusion and governance quality.
- Undertake impact assessments at farm, landscape and food-system levels, drawing, where appropriate, on [Regen10 Regenerative Food Systems Outcomes Framework](#); [LandScale](#); and [Tool for Agroecology Performance Evaluation](#).
- Assess not only aggregate outcomes, but also trade-offs, distributional effects and who benefits or bears the costs of transition.
- Link public incentives at all governance levels to performance against shared food system and landscape outcomes, while ensuring that requirements remain accessible to small-scale producers and marginalized groups.
- Shift how ministries report on nutrition, health, environment, economic development and agriculture so that reporting captures agroecological practices, outcomes and cross-sector contributions.
- Strengthen indicators on the rights, agency, leadership, access to resources and empowerment of youth, women and other marginalized groups across all areas of agroecological transition.



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