

AGROECOLOGY PLUS6

CATEGORY:

POLICY | RESEARCH | FIELD | **CLIMATE**

LOCATION/SCALE:

Senegal, Mali, Burkina Faso (National)

IMPLEMENTING ORGANISATION:

Groundswell International

PERIOD:

2016 - 2017

IN A NUTSHELL

Groundswell International and its partner organizations in West Africa (ANSD in Burkina Faso; Sahel Eco in Mali; and Agrecol Afrique in Senegal) implemented the “Agroecology Plus Six” (AE+6) program. The two year initiative aimed at **assessing the spreading of agroecological practices** across the Sahelian region. The programme generated practical strategies and lessons that can be applied to **build resilience of small-scale farmers in the drylands**. Complementary to the use of agroecology practices, the programme analysed six complementary strategies to build resilience by promoting equity for vulnerable groups, addressing gender inequality, improving governance and ensuring links to improved nutrition. The programme is designed to proof the concept of AE+6 and gathered relevant field level evidence in the pilot countries. Outcomes are policy briefs and thematic case studies that aim to influence decision makers towards supporting the upscaling the application of agroecology approaches.

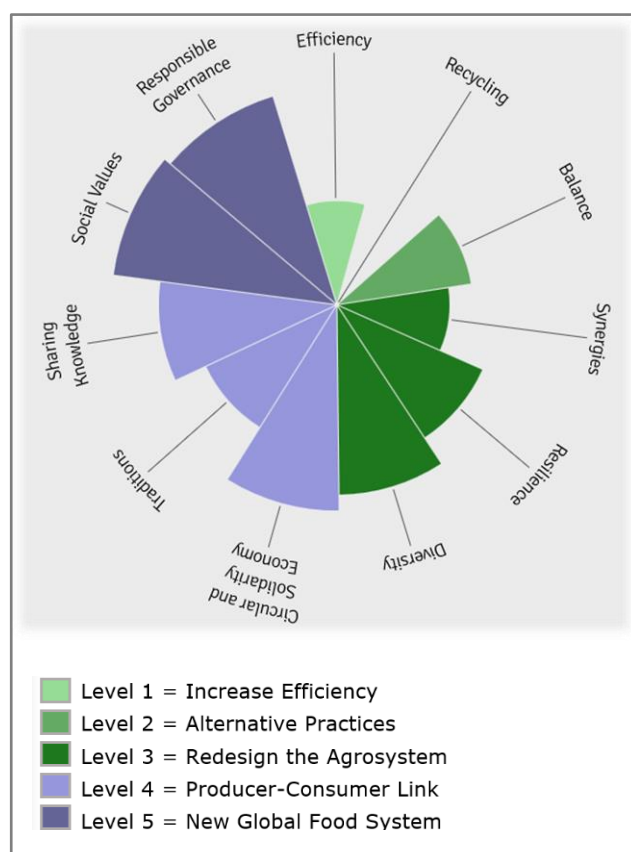


Figure: Assessment of the Plus6 based on FAO Elements of Agroecology and Gliessman's five levels of food system change

CONTEXT

An estimated 12 million small scale farmers and their families in the risk prone, dry land areas of the western Sahel have become chronically vulnerable to food and nutrition insecurity. Depending primarily on growing millet, sorghum, and cowpeas a growing percentage of dryland farm households has become very poor. Even in good rainfall years, they adopt negative coping mechanisms, such as taking exploitative loans, eating their seeds, reducing the number of daily meals and selling of assets. This has resulted in a growing “resilience deficit” and increasing dependence on humanitarian assistance.

OBJECTIVE

The main goal of this project is a growing movement of small-scale farmers and allies in the Sahel improving their own practices and creating an enhanced enabling environment, contributing to a transition by millions of farm households to a productive, sustainable, resilient agro-ecosystems.

KEY INTERVENTIONS

CONCEPTUAL LEVEL:

Test and prove the enhancement of Agroecology potential to build resilience through six strategies: 1) women's empowerment 2) social equity 3) nutrition 4) diversified (non-farm) women's livelihoods through savings and credit 5) improved local governance to support disaster risk reduction measures 6) effective strategies for scaling e.g. local multiplier effects, networking and alliances with national farmer organizations, documentation, and advocacy to influence policy.

FIELD LEVEL

- Transform existing farming practices through training of agroecology practices: testing and adapting new practices
- Empowerment for social and gender equity
- Strengthening the institutional capacity of partners and local actors for multi-sectoral action for resilience
- Developing a "farmer to farmer" multiplier effect for scaling out AE
- Undertaking "action research" to integrate gender, nutrition, and risk reduction measures
- Documenting lessons learned, results and processes and "leveraging" this learning through communications and advocacy
- Networking and linkage with national and regional networks.

LESSONS LEARNED/CHALLENGES

Amongst others, a progressive, sequential project process of intensification is essential: 1) collectively define problems and solutions; 2) community needs to experiment with a limited number of easy, low-cost agroecological innovations, using farmer-to-farmer learning in the field; 3) integrate strategies to promote nutrition, equity and women's empowerment; 4) sustain these strategies through strengthening governance and supportive policies at community, municipal and national levels. Challenges are other programmes in the region that undermine the goals of Agroecology, challenging socio-ecological contexts such as land tenure, climate change, negative image of farming or rural flight.

RELEVANT LINKS & REFERENCES

- Content paraphrased from Groundswell website: <https://bit.ly/2OHJdUs>
- Programme outcomes and policy notes: <https://bit.ly/2OHJdUs>

