

28<sup>th</sup> June 2022

## Call for expression of interest: **Consultancy to develop two policy briefs on agroecology as an approach for increasing resilience to agricultural input scarcity**

### Summary

The Biovision Foundation is launching a call for expression of interest for a consultant based in Switzerland (ideally) or Europe to support the Biovision-FAO initiative “FAO Geneva Dialogues for Agroecology”. This initiative aims to document, map and discuss multiple pathways for food system transformation through agroecology. This is done under the leadership of a guiding group and through an open dialogue with international actors (with a focus, albeit not exclusive, on the Geneva international community). The consultant will support the initiative, through the coordination and drafting of two policy briefs on the topic of “Agroecology as an approach for increasing resilience to agricultural input scarcity”.

The dialogue and policy papers will reflect on the current global food crisis and the looming scarcity of agricultural inputs. It will focus on a better understanding of concrete implementation steps and pathways to increase the resilience of food systems to agricultural inputs scarcity through agroecological approaches, in the areas of policy reform, knowledge creation and investments. For more information, please consult the concept note of this dialogue at the end of this document, and the concept note of the dialogue series at: [https://www.agroecology-pool.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/06/AE-Dialogues\\_Concept-planning.pdf](https://www.agroecology-pool.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/06/AE-Dialogues_Concept-planning.pdf)

### Main Tasks and Responsibilities:

The proposed work consists of the following activities:

- 1) Participate in the inception process of the guiding group for this dialogue, which will define the focus and structure of the international dialogue. Tasks include:**
  - a. Participate in the inception workshop of the guiding group (end of July 2022 – attendance negotiable in case of schedule conflicts)
  - b. Participate in an initial brainstorming on the structure of the policy briefs and the process to develop them. One brief will target the agroecology community (focusing on reflections that can strengthen the mission of the coalition), whereas the second brief will target outside stakeholders advocating for agroecology as a solution for reducing external input dependency
  - c. Bilateral meetings with guiding group members to follow leads and discuss content relevant to the policy briefs after the inception workshop
  - d. Initial scope of literature on the topic through the consultant's own research and through the suggestions done by guiding groupThe scope of tasks c) and d) will depend on outcomes from the inception workshop (task a).

**Deliverable:** A short concept note for the policy briefs (e.g., including guiding questions, outline of the document, methodology to integrate inputs from the dialogue, etc.).  
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- 2) **Support and participate in the FAO Geneva Dialogue on the topic of increasing resilience to agricultural input scarcity to be held on 29<sup>th</sup> September 2022. Tasks include:**
- Support the coordination of agenda and format of the event by providing inputs on content, speakers and messages
  - Prepare and coordinate a background document to be shared ahead of the dialogue presenting the topic and problematic and guiding questions
  - Coordinate the gathering of inputs from the dialogues to be integrated in the policy briefs
  - Documentation and organization of outputs coming out from dialogue, which will be the main inputs to the policy briefs. This will be done in collaboration with the organizers.

Deliverables:

Background document to be shared ahead of the dialogue.

Documentation of outputs coming out from the dialogue.

- 3) **Coordinate further inputs for the policy briefs. Tasks include:**
- Produce a first draft of the briefs to be presented and consulted with the guiding group.
  - Incorporate feedback from guiding group after consultation and group meeting.
  - Conduct any other rounds of feedback (e.g., bilaterally) with members of the guiding group when necessary.
  - Presentation of final draft of review to the guiding group. Incorporation of final messages as identified with this group.

The briefs should provide evidence, showcases and reflections that can help identify 1) to what extent agroecology serves as an approach for increasing resilience to input scarcity, 2) factors (e.g. policy instruments, investment mechanisms, international processes) that can support or hinder the transition towards food systems that are resilient to input scarcity, and 3) relations between input scarcity and other stresses and shocks impacting food systems (e.g. logistic crisis, climate change etc.).

Deliverable: Draft of two policy briefs. Depending on the length, it should contain an executive summary/abstract that provides a good overview of the topic for the audience.

- 4) **Supporting final drafting and dissemination of policy briefs.**
- Assistance with the design of the policy briefs that present reflections discussed in the dialogue event.
  - Provide support to dissemination activities of final policy briefs, including presentation to the Agroecology Coalition (<https://agroecology-coalition.org/>).

Deliverable: Final draft of two policy briefs

### Nature of Relationship:

The Consultant will be hired as an independent contractor and not as an employee of Biovision.

### Required skills and qualifications

Necessary Qualifications	Further necessary Skills
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Postgraduate degree in political science, land systems science, governance, sustainability or other relevant fields (Proven writing and communication skills to non-scientific audiences required)</li> <li>• OR scientific or policy journalist with proven knowledge and experience in the fields of development, cooperation, and agricultural development, or agricultural/natural resource policy processes</li> <li>• Knowledge of agricultural inputs and production (e.g., biological inputs, input production, subsidies and agricultural policies). Knowledge and experience on agroecology are desirable</li> <li>• Good understanding of food system transformation</li> <li>• Fluency in English</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ability to transfer recommendations from a multi-stakeholder process into a policy brief (coordination of multiple inputs and ideas)</li> <li>• Ability to work with limited standardized procedures and need for own initiative and independent work</li> <li>• Experience in multistakeholder dialogue</li> <li>• Skilful writing and experience in writing policy briefs</li> </ul>

### Submission of expression of interest

To apply, please send your entire electronic application documents by 8<sup>th</sup> July 2022 to [t.carrillo@biovision.ch](mailto:t.carrillo@biovision.ch). This should include a detailed curriculum vitae, cost for the proposed work, and a work timeline. A decision will be made by 15<sup>th</sup> July 2022 or before if a suitable candidate is found beforehand.

We expect the work to start as soon as possible until 31 October 2022. For further information please contact [agroecology@biovision.ch](mailto:agroecology@biovision.ch).



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## “Agroecology Dialogue Series”

### **Agroecology as an approach for increasing resilience to agricultural input scarcity Concept note version of 08.06.2022**

**Dates and format:** 29<sup>th</sup> Sept 2022 (TBC), hybrid format (TBC, Geneva and online)

*The Agroecology Dialogue Series is an initiative of FAO and the Biovision Foundation in support of the Coalition for food systems transformation through Agroecology (Agroecology Coalition).*

This dialogue will reflect on the current global food crisis and the looming scarcity of agricultural inputs. Record prices in fertilizers, supply chain interruption, increasing dependence on synthetic agricultural inputs and on a handful of suppliers have underlined the urgency of food system transformation. As a result, a number of countries are committing to reducing their dependence on synthetic inputs. The current crisis creates opportunities to advance food system transformation through agroecology.

The dialogue will focus on a better understanding of concrete implementation steps and pathways to increase the resilience of food systems to agricultural inputs scarcity through agroecological approaches, in the areas of policy reform, knowledge creation and investments.

#### Background

##### **A looming input scarcity crisis with long-lasting effects**

Prices of agri-inputs, in particular fertilizers and energy, are at record highs. The increase in fertilizers price started towards the end of 2021 and has been amplified by the war in Ukraine. A 30% increase in fertilizers price was monitored in May 2022 compared to the start of 2022<sup>1</sup>. Soaring prices are driven by a confluence of factors, including surging input and energy costs, supply disruptions caused by sanctions (Belarus and Russia), and export restrictions (Russia, Ukraine, China and Kyrgyzstan).

Fertilizer prices are expected to remain higher as long as the price of natural gas and coal remain high. Disruption in fertilizer affordability and availability is creating concerns over future harvests and global agricultural production, exacerbating global food insecurity. It thus risks keeping food prices high for a long time.

The spike in the price of inputs raises questions about farmers' capacity to buy them and the extent of the contraction of their margins. Farmers may reduce input applications or switch to less input-intensive crops, which would not only lower productivity but also have negative effects on exports of key foodstuffs to the international markets (FAO 2022). At the consumer level, connected rising food and fuel price would impact more severely poor households.

Import dependant countries will be the most at risk, bearing both an increase in the food import bills driven by price rises and reduced imports of inputs, constraining further domestic production.

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<sup>1</sup> Baffes and Koh 2021 Fertilizer prices expected to remain higher for longer. World Bank Blog <https://blogs.worldbank.org/opendata/fertilizer-prices-expected-remain-higher-longer>



### Interrelated issues and domino effects

The crisis highlights the interdependence between various factors (IPES-Food 2022):

- Structure of import dependencies for food staples and for inputs and the source and level of diversification of imports. For instance, African countries have become especially food import-dependent, accompanied by cash crops exports and cheap grain imports.
- Sturdy increasing reliance of farmers on synthetic fertilizers and pesticides over the past decades and limited alternatives for less damaging inputs, for instance bio-inputs.
- High concentration of agri-input production in certain regions and a handful of suppliers. The main emitters are for instance China, India, North America and Europe.
- Highly distorting policy instruments often creating incentives for overproduction and overuse of inputs. Worldwide, around USD 90 billion are provided through fiscal subsidies for input use (FAO, UNDP and UNEP 2021). Input subsidies represent on average the largest share of public budgets allocated to agriculture in sub-Saharan Africa.
- Path dependencies in production systems: accumulated investments in specialized commodity systems, or specialized processing and transportation infrastructures. They limit farmers' ability to shift and diversify their production in response to global market instability and food security needs.
- Nexus with other stresses: interrelations between conflict, climate change, poverty and other general negative impacts of chemical input use, such as deterioration of soil and human health.

### Agroecology is a form of crisis response

The crisis has offered a window of political opportunity for change in food systems. Agroecology promotes practices that reduce the need for chemical inputs and protect and restore the soil and biodiversity. Another principle of agroecology is related to circular food economy, where waste can be valorised as inputs at the territorial level. For instance, models of bio-fertilizers production that downsize and decentralize fertilizer production, making it feasible to implement on a village-level basis using locally available resources and labour, have been proposed.

Besides, rebuilding domestic food production with context-specific approaches over the coming months and years could help to mitigate price spikes. Another area to provide insurance against disruption in agri-inputs is to ensure a more diverse mix of local, regional, and global supplies, including of fertilizers.

As an immediate response to the crisis, enhancing the efficiency of input use has been one of the identified solutions. Although a first step towards sustainability, this does not address the issue of damaging dependencies and power relations. For instance, the loss of soil microbiota through intensive fertilizer usage reinforces the need for synthetic fertilizer to sustain yields in the short term. The urgency to address immediate food security risks should not restrain the profound structural change in food systems. However, such transformation requires carefully sequenced steps so that farmers can move away from external input-intensive systems and diversify their production, without compromising food security.



### Potential key guiding questions for the dialogue:

- Is agroecology an approach for increasing resilience to input scarcity?
  - Does agroecology increase the resilience of farmers to variability in inputs affordability and availability?
  - Does agroecology increase the resilience of countries to international market instability and global input scarcity crisis?
  - Does agroecology increase the resilience of businesses involved in input production or support to farmers toward models aligned with agroecological principles?
- What actions are needed to transition towards food systems that are resilient to input scarcity?
  - What are the policy options? What are the policy bottlenecks to enable this transition?
  - What types of investments are needed? How do we enable them?
  - What are the pathways to reduce external input dependency through agroecological transformation? How to implement these across contexts (e.g., depending on domestic supply/import dependency) and considering multiple trade-offs?
- What are the relations between input scarcity and other stresses and shocks impacting food systems (e.g. logistic crisis, climate change, etc.)? Can AE address multiplying effects?

### Potential key case studies/examples:

The case studies will consist of examples of countries/regions committed and implementing programs to phase-out of synthetic fertiliser presently or in the past and to cope with the crisis.

- Bhutan: government's plan to phase out of chemical fertilisers and pesticide use
- Mexico: recent commitments to reduce chemical use for key commodity corps (?)
- Republic Korea: Environmentally Friendly Direct Payment Program (EFDPP) since 1999. The main objective of the programme was to reduce the amount of agrochemicals and tackle environmental degradation.
- Brazil, Sustainable Agriculture Associate Group (GAAS, Grupo Asociado de Agricultura Sustentável): a network of large farms, both conventional and organic, has been formed at the federal level to encourage the on-farm production of micro-organisms for fertilisation or plant health. Related to the National Bio-inputs Programme. Contact: Frederic Goulet, CIRAD
- Indonesia: Rise and demise of the National Integrated Pest Management Program (1989-1999). The NIPM programme was established in order to phase out of pesticide subsidies. => example of change in path and its negative effects
- Organisations and businesses involved in the production and promotion of Bio-agri-inputs / or in incorporating organic practices: Eco Holding (Kenya), Ecodudu (Kenya), Safiorganics (Kenya), NADEF (Madhya Pradesh), SEKEM (Egypt), Integrated Pest Management (La Réunion)

### Core guiding group for the theme

The core guiding group will be composed of partner organizations (including the Agroecology Coalition). The members will bring expertise to the topic as well as connections to broader networks.



### Audience for this theme

- the *Agroecology coalition* members and its working groups
- Actors involved in agricultural production, trade, national and global responses, such as UNCTAD, ITC, IISD, IFPRI, WFP, IATP, GRAIN, GAIN, WRI
- Other initiatives involved in global responses: Global Alliance for Food Security, African Emergency Food Production Facility (AfDB), World Bank, UN Global Crisis Response Group
- Actors from the inputs production sector: private sector, but also public/investment actors: WBCSD, WEF communities, GDPRD
- Other Policymakers designing or implementing agricultural policies (Food Policy Forum for Change)
- Initiatives working on resilience to multiple shocks and stresses (e.g. FAO, RUAF, CIRAD – Resilient City Region Food systems)

### Relevant resources

- IFPRI 2022. Fertilizers dashboard <https://www.ifpri.org/blog/high-fertilizer-prices-contribute-rising-global-food-security-concerns>
- IPES-Food 2022. Another perfect storm. IPES-Food report [https://www.ipes-food.org/\\_img/upload/files/AnotherPerfectStorm.pdf](https://www.ipes-food.org/_img/upload/files/AnotherPerfectStorm.pdf)
- FAO. 2022. Food Outlook – Biannual Report on Global Food Markets. Rome. <https://doi.org/10.4060/cb9427en> => Global Input Price Index (GIPI) and impact of changes in inputs price
- FAO. 2019. World fertilizer trends and outlook to 2022. Rome. <https://www.fao.org/3/ca6746en/ca6746en.pdf>
- Goulet F., 2021. Biological inputs and agricultural policies in South America: between disruptive innovation and continuity. Montpellier, CIRAD, Perspective 55. <https://doi.org/10.19182/perspective/36383>
- Jean-Philippe Deguine, Jean-Noël Aubertot, Rica Joy Flor, Françoise Lescourret, Kris A.G. Wyckhuys, Alain Ratnadass. 2021. Integrated pest management: good intentions, hard realities. A review. *Agronomy for Sustainable Development*, 41:38 => evidence on IPM
- World Bank 2022: Food Security Update – Brief on rising food insecurity. [Food security update \(worldbank.org\)](https://www.worldbank.org)
- Benton et al 2022. The Ukraine war and threats to food and energy security; [The Ukraine war and threats to food and energy security | Chatham House – International Affairs Think Tank](https://www.chathamhouse.org/2022/04/the-ukraine-war-and-threats-to-food-and-energy-security)
- Clapp and Elver. 2022: [The war in Ukraine could spark a hurricane of global hunger \(trust.org\)](https://www.trust.org)

### Resources on policy support for inputs and their impact:

- DeBoe, G. 2020. Impacts of Agricultural Policies on Productivity and Sustainability Performance in Agriculture: A Literature Review. OECD Food, Agriculture and Fisheries Papers, no. 141. Paris: OECD Publishing. <https://dx.doi.org/10.1787/6bc916e7-en>.  
FAO, UNDP and UNEP 2021 A multi-billion-dollar opportunity – Repurposing agricultural support to transform food systems. Rome, FAO. <https://doi.org/10.4060/cb6562en> => Focus on the issue of input subsidies and some case studies



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- Jayne, T., and S. Rashid. 2013. Input Subsidy Programs in Sub-Saharan Africa: A Synthesis of Recent Evidence. *Agricultural Economics* 44 (6): 547–62.
- OECD. 2020. *Agricultural Policy Monitoring and Evaluation 2020*. Paris. (also available at <https://dx.doi.org/10.1787/928181a8-en>) => data on support to Agriculture
- UNEP 2019. Study on the effects of taxes and subsidies on pesticides and fertilizers. Background document to UNEA-5 Review Report on the Environmental and Health Effects of Pesticides and Fertilizers <https://greenfiscalpolicy.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/Study-on-the-Effects-of-Pesticide-and-Fertilizer-Subsidies-and-Taxes-Final-17.7.2020.pdf>
- Modelling study from Millennium Institute in Bhutan on the national transition to Agroecology