

Boosting National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans (NBSAPs) through Agroecology



Key messages | Online dialogue 12th March 2024

On March 12 2024, the initiative "[Boosting National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans \(NBSAPs\) through Agroecology](#)" organized an online dialogue with more than 50 participants from 18 countries. The dialogue aimed to support decision-makers in the integration of agroecology and agroecosystems approaches in the development of their respective NBSAPs. It facilitated the exchange of good practices, expertise and resources among the national focal points and other relevant actors leading the development of national policies on biodiversity and/or agroecology. This document presents a summary of messages emerging from the discussions between participants during the dialogue, as well as ideas for strategic advocacy and broader engagement.

Message 1: A first step towards a better integration of agroecology into NBSAPs is a deep understanding and recognition of agroecology as a systemic approach and its associated co-benefits

Participants highlighted the following elements regarding the recognition of agroecology and political awareness:

- **Increasing perception and adoption of agroecology as a systemic approach:** Agroecology is increasingly recognized for its potential to address multiple challenges holistically in agriculture, food systems and biodiversity. However, its adoption hasn't been as rapid as expected, pointing towards issues of perception, understanding, and resistance to systemic support by both government and society.
- **Varying degrees of recognition and understanding:** Participants noted inconsistency in the way agroecology is recognized and understood by different government actors and in national policies. Some countries indirectly incorporate agroecological elements and principles through related concepts, whereas direct mentions are rare. This underscores the need for clear definitions within NBSAPs to enhance synergy and understanding.
- **Preserving the integrity of agroecology:** There's a challenge in preserving the integrity of agroecology amid its growing recognition, with concerns over the co-optation and dilution of its principles. A key challenge will be to maintain agroecology's identity as a science, practice, and movement rooted in the rights and knowledge of farmers and food

provisioners, while engaging other broader actors (e.g. investors, policymakers, retailers) in non-hierarchical ways without cooptation or subordination.



Advocacy tips towards integration:

- **The endorsement of the principles of agroecology by 197 countries¹** could be used for advocacy purposes to demonstrate the growing recognition of agroecology.
- **Leverage the principles of agroecology** by analysing how countries are already implementing some of the agroecology principles in existing programmes. This analysis can help sensitize and lower resistance from governments to support agroecology, even in industrialized countries.

Message 2: Making a case for agroecology across development goals and in relation to the KMGB Framework

To advance the integration of agroecology in NBSAPs, and any other broader national frameworks, it is crucial to develop strategies that highlight its co-benefits for broader societal goals and to align those benefits with committed frameworks. This includes emphasizing its contributions to biodiversity conservation, food security, and economic viability, in particular:

- **Landscape Connectivity and Biodiversity Outcomes:** Agroecology supports biodiversity on farms, in agricultural landscapes and beyond. Participants highlighted practices like smaller field sizes and the integration of trees on farms, which enhance landscape connectivity and biodiversity. These practices align with agroecology's benefits to biodiversity at the landscape level and its link to land, water, seeds, and livestock (Target 1, Target 7, Target 10, Target 11).
- **Food Security and Economic Viability:** Concerns about agroecology providing sufficient food and income reflect the need for demonstrating its co-benefits across food security and economic sustainability, addressing counter-narratives around yields and productivity (Target 7, Target 11).
- **Agroecology for Social Diversity and Healthy Foods:** Emphasising agroecology as a promoter of social diversity and healthy foods reinforces its role in supporting sustainable and equitable food systems. This perspective aligns with the rights of knowledge holders and emphasizes the importance of traditional knowledge in agroecological practices (Target 21, Target 22).
- **Navigating Challenges in Industrial Contexts:** The difficulty of making a business case for agroecology in heavily industrialized and monoculture contexts underscores that agroecological transition pathways will differ vastly across contexts.
- **Other benefits and touching points:** Clear linkages between agroecology and key entry points such as pollinators conservation, contribution to soil health, and conservation of genetic resources can help integrate agroecology with the KMGBF (Target 4, Target 11, Target 13), as well as broader environmental agendas and the other two Rio Conventions.

¹ FAO (2019) Report of the Conference of FAO. 41st Session. Rome, 22–29 2019.
<http://www.fao.org/3/na421en/na421en.pdf>



Advocacy tips towards integration:

- **Identifying synergies between agroecology principles and broader government objectives** can help align agroecology with national goals while making a case adapted to specific contexts.
- **Identifying key entry points** at the crossroads of national priorities and multiple international frameworks (e.g. gender, health) for cross-influence.

Message 3: Taking into consideration the legacy of NBSAP processes when bridging the gap between agroecology and broader environmental agendas

- **Historical Exclusion in NBSAP Processes:** The historical lack of integration of food system perspectives in NBSAP processes was mentioned, underscoring a need to bridge this gap and position agroecology and agrobiodiversity at the forefront of these conversations.
- **Inclusion and Coordination Challenges:** Based on the experience of past and current NBSAP revisions, we see generally a low integration and participation of agroecology and agrobiodiversity actors in NBSAP processes, hinting at the prevalence of "biodiversity people club" where agroecological actors are underrepresented. This signals a need for better coordination and participation of agroecology as a coordinated movement in these conversations.
- **Lack of precedence:** The lack of robust international agroecology frameworks and the failure in previous NBSAP efforts (like those connected to the Aichi targets) can stigmatize political will and policy efforts in bridging agroecology with NBSAPs.



Advocacy tips towards integration:

- **Advocacy is identified as crucial** to engage with CBD country negotiators and national actors, and to mobilize CSO networks to advocate for the integration of agroecology into all planning stages. This approach is vital for ensuring that agroecology's rights-based aspects are adequately represented and supported.
- **Leveraging other international commitments** (e.g. related to Rio Conventions, Committee on World Food Security) and supporting efforts towards the inclusion of agroecology in multiple global frameworks, through member states, government allies, CSO and external pressures.
- **Advocacy and sensitization efforts are crucial also within the agroecology community** on the importance of NBSAPs and on the value of participating in these discussions (or more generally global agreements and their national implementation policies).

Message 4: Balancing national strategies and national policy integration for higher implementation success

A strong integration of agroecology at various national levels and in key national frameworks is an important enabling step for NBSAP inclusion, which would ensure a more successful implementation. Discussions highlighted the importance of political awareness, cross-sectoral dialogue, international support, and leveraging synergies between agroecology and broader government goals.

- **Expanding agroecology understanding beyond NBSAPs:** The need to broaden the understanding and inclusion of agroecology beyond NBSAPs in other national policy frameworks was highlighted. This is especially important as Ministries of Environment (often custodians of the NBSAP) often have little influence over developments in other sectors.
- **Policy hierarchy and integration:** It's crucial to strategically position policies and engage with key ministries to elevate agroecology in national agendas. By integrating agroecology into top-tier policy documents (e.g. national development plans) and ensuring active collaboration with development and planning ministries, agroecology can gain the necessary visibility, and have better chances to receive national resources, and priority to be effectively mainstreamed across sectors and sub-plans. Although a challenging task, hindered by competing agendas and priorities, it would improve policy coherence at large.
- **National agroecology policies and strategies:** Some countries are in the early stages of incorporating agroecology into national policies and sectoral plans. Efforts are focused on building institutional capacities and establishing funding channels for agroecology, with inter-ministerial committees set up to address integration challenges.
- **Integration challenges and opportunities:** Agroecology integration faces dichotomies and tensions (e.g. between agribusiness and non-commercial actors; between a stronger focus on peasant/small scale family farming systems vs. mainstreaming agroecological principles across all actors, including larger commercial farmers; between short-term vs. long-term benefits); these are difficult conversations. There is a need for actors (on all sides) to recognize diversity in production systems beyond the agroecology vs. conventional agriculture dichotomy, and that address agroecology as an approach to all types of actors.



Advocacy tip towards integration:

- **Harness national political context:** The development and integration of agroecology policies are significantly influenced by the political context. In many countries, opportunities to advance agroecology through policy development have arisen with political shifts. The need to be opportunistic and strategic in advocacy efforts is highlighted, stressing the importance of choosing the right partners and timing to influence policy. While external pressure can facilitate change, it cannot replace the intrinsic willingness of policymakers to engage in meaningful consultation.

Messages 5: Food system interventions can enhance the effectiveness of NBSAPs

Expanding the focus beyond individual targets to include a broader spectrum of agroecology-related goals can enhance the effectiveness of NBSAPs in promoting biodiversity conservation and sustainable use. Participants emphasized the need for clear policy directives, engagement with value chain actors, and the development of financial and incentive models that support the principles of agroecology.

- **Interventions that engage with Value Chain Actors:** Identifying allies within value chains, such as coffee exporters, and working on incentive models that consider environmental conservation and climate resilience, were highlighted as good strategies. These approaches can help overcome barriers within value chains and promote investment in agroecological practices.
- **Local production programme and PES Schemes:** National programmes focusing on local production and agroecological-friendly practices, alongside payment for ecosystem services (PES) schemes, exemplify actionable policy plans that could be integrated into NBSAPs to foster agroecology and sustainable food production.



Advocacy tips towards integration:

- **Broadening audience and process** to bring the focus not only on [Target 10](#) (Enhance Biodiversity and Sustainability in Agriculture), but also to include in discussions and actions other relevant targets related to production and consumption (e.g. [Target 16](#), [Target 18](#)).
- **Draw lessons from multistakeholder coordination efforts** in the agricultural sector to develop food system interventions across a wide range of actors, from farm to plate and importantly across ministries. Those platforms are often supported by international funding and represent a model for overcoming integration challenges and promoting policy coherence.

Message 6: The value of agroecological approaches for participation and collective vision (in relation to KMGBF targets)

- **Policies that encourage active participation across sectors:** the participants underscored the importance of consultation and active participation from various stakeholders, including increasing participation of agroecological actors, not only during the drafting of NBSAPs but also in their implementation. This suggests a strategic focus on actionable policies that encourage active participation across sectors. Agroecological interventions have participation at its core ([Target 22](#)).
- **The potential advantages of focusing on territorial approaches as planning and implementation scale:** Territorial scale was suggested as optimal for transitioning towards agroecology, advocating for the development of collective visions among diverse stakeholders and policymakers along the food value chain. This approach can also capture urban and rural areas at the same time as cohesive food systems, and could harness the opportunities for targeting and engaging specific value chains, which can be key for financing ([Target 19](#)).

- **Gender considerations:** Emphasizing the need to consider gender aspects in agroecology practices in particular related to knowledge management, capacity building, and development efforts (Target 23). The discussion suggests adapting interventions to accommodate different types of actors, including smaller vs. larger farmers.

Message 7: Reflecting on monitoring and evaluation (M&E), there is a need for clear, measurable objectives in the integration of agroecology

There are also a few general takeaways regarding M&E, underscoring the importance of setting specific, achievable goals within designated time frames:

- **Call for clear, time-bound targets and a robust framework for monitoring and evaluation for agroecology:** Addressing the challenge of concretely defining what agroecology can deliver within NBSAPs, can be critical for mainstreaming agroecology's contributions on a target-by-target basis. A key recommendation is to develop time-bound targets.
- **Developing Indicator Bibliography:** The development of an indicator bibliography from different monitoring frameworks points to the benefits of a systematic effort to establish a comprehensive set of indicators for agroecology. This would support research and policy formulation by providing tools to measure progress, assess impacts, and guide adaptive management practices.
- **Robust M&E for safeguarding:** One main challenge is ensuring policy coherence and robust funding support for an agroecological transition. Understanding power dynamics within food systems and developing robust monitoring systems can help prevent the co-optation and dilution of genuine agroecological interventions.
- **Navigating Target 10 as a complex target through M&E:** The complexity of navigating Target 10, which includes divergent frames like sustainable agricultural intensification, suggests the need for engaging in the development of indicators through technical groups. Leveraging M&E frameworks for other targets can create inroads for mainstreaming agroecology.

Message 8: Financing the agroecological transition through an investment mix, including NBSAP-aligned funding

The topic of financing came up quite prominently in many of the conversations, with several themes emerging around the complexities of funding agroecology, capacity challenges, and the potential role of private and public sectors in facilitating the transition to sustainable practices.

- **Follow the money to fund agroecology:** Agriculture initiatives are often much better funded than those in the environmental sector, and therefore the agricultural sector has a significant influence on policy directions. This situation stresses the importance of securing adequate financing for NBSAPs by leveraging action in the agricultural sector. It also shows the importance of targeting ministries with budget authority for agroecology sensitization and developing robust monitoring systems to track the impact and effectiveness of funding.
- **Investment mix & policy frameworks:** Although agroecology still received considerably less funding than conventional agriculture, there is growing momentum for agroecology

among funders. Capitalising on these opportunities requires innovative investment approaches and the development of supportive policy frameworks to facilitate public and private funding. However, this strategy should go hand in hand with strengthening the business case and capacity of the agroecological private sector to operate at scale. A deeper understanding of the potential of agroecological interventions to attract private investment for biodiversity aligned with NBSAPs should be explored, in particular for the Global South where public investment dominates biodiversity finance.

- **Critical investment edge:** Biodiversity projects are not seen as naturally investable due to difficulties in setting baselines, measuring impact, and the shortcomings of market mechanisms (e.g. voluntary carbon markets). The agroecology community should see NBSAPs as an opportunity to attract funding for agroecology by showcasing the critical investment edge of agroecology over other biodiversity interventions.

Presentation on levers for unlocking agroecology, including financial incentives

The dialogue also included a keynote presentation by IFAD that underscored the role of agroecological transitions in meeting biodiversity targets, emphasising the need for involvement of the agricultural sector in developing and implementing NBSAPs. Highlights included i) preliminary results from a survey that indicates only 25% of farmer organizations engage with National Biodiversity focal points; ii) an overview of successful projects demonstrating the use of business cases, financial incentives (like subsidies or market-driven approaches) and communication campaigns, which showcased how these levers can unlock agroecology's potential for biodiversity outcomes; and iv) insights on funding avenues such as IFAD programs, the GBFF, and private finance (e.g. the Africa Regional Biodiversity Financing Platform, which currently has an open invitation to join the initiative, register under this link: <https://forms.office.com/e/ULvgl0Qfy1>).

Presentation slides are available at: https://bit.ly/AE_NBSAPs_IFAD_presentation_20240312.

Other resources shared during the keynote presentation include:

- [Stock-take report on agroecology in IFAD operations](#)
- [Programming directions for the global biodiversity framework fund](#)
- [Information on project Upper Tana Water Fund Nairobi](#)
- [Upcoming UNEP webinar on Introduction to Nature Finance \(16 April 2024, 12-1 EAT\)](#)
- Past UNEP webinars on: [Introduction to Environmental Financing. Principles and Approaches and Terminologies](#) and [Introduction to Climate Finance](#)

For further information, visit the initiative website and subscribe for updates on the upcoming handbook that would integrate messages from the online dialogue: <https://www.agroecology-pool.org/national-biodiversity-strategies-and-action-plans>.

