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Update on the Scaling up Agroecology Initiative

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I. Introduction

1. The Scaling up Agroecology Initiative¹ was launched by FAO and UN Partners (World Food Programme (WFP), International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), UN Development Programme (UNDP), and UN Environment Programme (UNEP)² during the 2nd International Symposium on Agroecology: *Scaling up Agroecology to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)*³, in Rome, April 2018. Its governance structure is composed by the UN-Partners' Advisory Mechanism, the Secretariat (hosted by FAO) and the FAO Inter-Departmental Working Group.

II. Action plan for Scaling up Agroecology Initiative 2019-2020

2. COAG 26 “welcomed the Scaling up Agroecology Initiative and requested FAO to develop an action plan with partners, taking into account country needs and capacities”. The action plan has been developed in collaboration with partners, based on three interrelated areas of work: i) knowledge and innovations; ii) policy processes; iii) building connections. It has been approved and launched during a meeting of the UN Partners Advisory Mechanism held on 30 January 2019, including activities for the period 2019-2020, which are detailed in the below section.

A. Area of Work 1: Knowledge and innovation for sustainable food and agricultural systems

3. The Initiative supports local and national efforts to deliver solutions for context-specific needs by generating and co-creating knowledge and conducting capacity-building and training activities. It strengthens field-based capacity to sustainably manage agro-ecosystems across entire landscapes and seascapes by supporting food producers' organizations, institutions, extension agents and researchers helping countries achieve food security. It also enables knowledge sharing across countries and regions that require new solutions to changing climates. The Initiative aims at demonstrating the impact of Agroecology by expanding the evidence base, exploring research gaps and supporting data collection at national level.

- a) *Activity 1: Strengthen and consolidate the evidence base on Agroecology, including development of tools, methodologies and indicators to support data collection for policymaking.*
 - The Tool for Agroecology Performance Evaluation (TAPE) was developed by FAO divisions and external partners and published in December 2019, based on the Ten Elements of Agroecology⁴: Trainings on TAPE were carried out in 2019 in different countries and regions and the first inputs are coming from the piloting projects to populate the global database.
- b) *Activity 2: Scale up Agroecology within the programme of work of UN Partners*
 - FAO concluded its stocktaking exercise on its engagement on Agroecology based on the 2018-2019 Work Plan⁵. The methodology and the results were shared among partners. IFAD adapted it to develop their own project portfolio assessment. Based on this, FAO and IFAD are developing Economic and Financial Analysis guidelines for project development and design focused on Agroecology. Additionally, UN Partners constantly exchange information on regional and country activities to enable increased coordination, collaborations and synergies on Agroecology-related projects.

¹ <http://www.fao.org/3/I9049EN/i9049en.pdf>

² WHO and World Bank recently joining the Initiative.

³ <http://www.fao.org/3/ca3666en/ca3666en.pdf>

⁴ <http://www.fao.org/Agroecology/tools/en/>

⁵ <http://www.fao.org/3/I9007EN/i9007en.pdf>

c) *Activity 3: Raise awareness and build capacities on Agroecology among technical staff of UN Partners*

- FAO carried out seminars and webinars to increase awareness and technical capacities on Agroecology with UN organizations (UNDP, UNEP, IFAD) and international partners⁶. Technical seminars were organized also within FAO.
- The following learning tools are being developed: e-learning course on Agroecology; educational videos; and revamping of the Agroecology Knowledge Hub⁷.

B. Area of Work 2. Policy processes for transformation of food and agricultural systems

4. The Initiative assists countries in the development of policies for Agroecology with the participation of non-state actors. It provides technical support to countries and seeks to harness existing international instruments and decisions of inter-governmental bodies, including the 2030 Agenda, to support agroecological transition. It catalyzes cooperation throughout the UN system to strengthen agencies' capacities to support agroecological transition processes.

d) *Activity 1: Technical support to countries in developing public policies and initiatives, including through South-South and Triangular Cooperation.*

- **India:** Support is being provided to the Zero Budget Natural Farming (ZBNF) Programme, through which 580 000 farmers (3 000 villages) are currently adopting agroecological practices. The Government of Andhra Pradesh aims at reaching 6 million farmers by 2024. FAO and Agricultural Research for Development (CIRAD) are carrying out a foresight study on agriculture trends to show the potential impact of a full conversion of the State to Agroecology. UNEP published a video showcasing these advances⁸.
- **Senegal:** On the request of the Government, the Initiative provided support to the National Committee “Dynamic for Agroecological Transition in Senegal” (DYATES). Policy recommendations were elaborated, through consultations in six different agroecological zones, and were delivered to the government during the “Agroecology Days” (30 January – 1 February 2020, Dakar).
- **Mexico:** The Government requested the Initiative to provide support in the development of an Agroecological Transition Programme, which will be done through a consultation process in five regions.
- **Other countries:** The Initiative also provides technical and policy support to an increasing number of countries (and states/municipalities) which request assistance to guide transition processes through Agroecology⁹:
 - Development of a 10 Year Regional Programme for Agroecology in West Africa in response to climate change and nutrition, following a request from the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS).
 - Development of a Regional Policy Framework on Agroecology following the request of the Parliamentarian Front of Latin America & the Caribbean (PARLATINO).

⁶ Including IFOAM, Biovision, Global Agriculture and Food Security Programme, INRA, CIRAD, Agroecology Europe and universities (Wageningen, Coventry, ECOSUR, Nacional de Nicaragua, Politécnica de Madrid, Internacional de Andalucía, among others).

⁷ <http://www.fao.org/Agroecology/home/en/>

⁸ <https://www.unenvironment.org/news-and-stories/video/araku-valley-andra-pradesh-india-were-finally-reaping-results-our-labour>

⁹ Examples: Nicaragua, Antigua and Barbuda, Argentina (Buenos Aires Province), Colombia, Cuba, Sao Tome and Principe, South Africa, The Bahamas, Tanzania and Zimbabwe. More information could be provided if necessary.

- In collaboration with UNESCO and Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), a proposal is being developed for a regional project on Higher Education Institutions (HEIs).
 - Recent organization of 2 sub-regional seminars in Western Balkans and Central Asia to assess needs, gaps and prioritize areas of work.
- e) *Activity 2: Facilitating access to finance to scale up Agroecology.*
- Incorporation of agroecological approaches in Global Environment Facility (GEF) projects related to climate change adaptation, Farmer Field Schools and nutrition dense food through social protection.¹⁰
 - IFAD is working on: i) the development of guidelines for staff to understand and support Agroecology in IFAD operations; ii) the development of grant proposals blended with investment operations that promote Agroecology.
 - Advocacy and awareness raising activities have been developed with a group of donors including Agroecology Fund, the Global Alliance for the Future of Food, the McKnight Foundation and development cooperation agencies from France, Germany and Switzerland.
- f) *Activity 3: Developing technical guidelines on Agroecology in support of international instruments.*
- Technical contribution to ongoing policy convergence process within the Committee on World Food Security to produce policy recommendations on “Agroecological and other innovative approaches for sustainable agriculture and food systems that enhance food security and nutrition”.
 - Incorporation of agroecological approaches in the Koronivia Joint Work for Agriculture and in the upcoming revision of Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) (2020).

C. Area of Work 3. Building connections for transformative change

5. The Initiative works with all stakeholders – governments, producer organizations, consumers, civil society, research and the private sector – and support networks and platforms for knowledge exchange and dialogue at national, regional and international levels. It will ensure collaboration and coordination among UN agencies.

- g) *Activity 1: Build connections to pertinent UN Initiatives.*
- The Global Action Plan of the UN Decade of Family Farming (2019-2028) incorporates several activities related to Agroecology to support family farmers worldwide. Such activities are linked to youth empowerment; the development of public policies to support biodiversity and integrated systems and capacity development for family farmers and their organizations through horizontal and participatory approaches. In addition, a D-Group on Agroecology is being created within the Family Farming Knowledge Platform, focused on the Africa region.
 - UN Partners under the Initiative have submitted a joint contribution to the strategy of the United Nations Decade on Ecosystem Restoration (2021-2030).
- h) *Activity 2: Outreach, awareness raising and network building activities.*
- In collaboration with the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC), FibL and Biovision, the Initiative supported the elaboration of case studies on

¹⁰ One example is the AVACLIM project (2019-2022), funded by the GEF and the Foundation for Environmental Monitoring, in partnership with Le Centre d’Actions et de Réalisations Internationales (CARI) in Burkina Faso, Senegal, Ethiopia, South Africa, Morocco, India and Brazil.

Agroecology's potential to hedge against climate change (global analysis and country studies in Kenya and Senegal). Results showed that agroecological approaches build resilience through increased adaptive capacity and reduced vulnerability in agroecosystems. This is achieved by strengthening soil health, biodiversity and overall diversity i.e. integrating different breeds, varieties and species in the systems while maintaining productivity and yield stability. Mitigation co-benefits are also achieved, mainly related to increased soil organic matter (carbon sequestration and living biomass) and reduced use of synthetic fertilizers. The study also analyzed the role of Agroecology in NDCs showing that out of 136 NDCs reviewed, 17 countries (12.5 percent) explicitly mention Agroecology as a strategy. The results have been disseminated through several side events organized by FAO and partners during COP 25 held in Madrid (4-6 December 2019).

- Other side events were organized during the Committee on World Food Security, the COAG meeting and other high-level fora.