



MAKING MONEY MOVE FOR AGROECOLOGY

TRANSFORMING DEVELOPMENT AID
TO SUPPORT AGROECOLOGY



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Agroecology, Water
and Resilience



together for global justice

ABOUT THIS PAPER:



Donors have a huge role to play in accelerating the transition to agroecology. This policy briefing makes compelling and concrete suggestions for unlocking finance for agroecology.

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This policy briefing was prepared by Colin Anderson, François Delvaux, Faris Ahmed, Vincent Dauby and Nina Moeller. The authors would like to thank all CIDSE members, especially the Task Force on finance and agroecology for their valuable contributions. The Task Force consists of following member organisations: Broederlijk Delen (Belgium), CAFOD (England and Wales), Entraide et Fraternité (Belgium), MISEREOR (Germany), SCIAF (Scotland) and Trócaire (Ireland).

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CIDSE is an international family of Catholic social justice organisations, working together to promote justice, harness the power of global solidarity and create transformational change to end poverty and inequalities. We do this by challenging systemic injustice and inequity as well as destruction of nature. We believe in a world where every human being has the right to live in dignity.

Agroecology Now! is a research, action and communications project convened by the Centre for Agroecology, Water and Resilience at Coventry University (UK) that focuses on understanding and supporting the societal transformations necessary to enable agroecology as a model for sustainable and just food systems.

The following organisations are endorsing the policy briefing:

SUMMARY

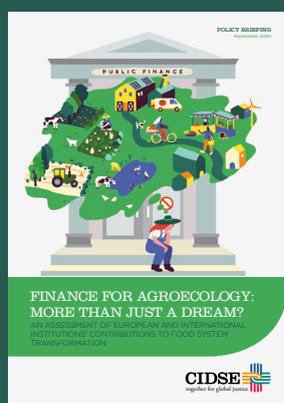
The now widely recognised potential of agroecology as the basis for just sustainability is severely hampered by the quantity and quality of financing available for its development. The organisations, food producers and proponents that are advancing agroecology around the world have little access to public and philanthropic financing. The majority of finance for agriculture is allocated to destructive models of agriculture that undermine not only agroecology, but also food security, environmental sustainability, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the Paris Agreement. When funding does go to agroecology, it is often delivered through problematic financing mechanisms and approaches that limit the ability of agroecology to reach its potential. Yet, there are some emerging exemplary donors forging new pathways, and other donors are realising the need to shift towards agroecology.

In this policy briefing, we synthesise the findings from the research commissioned by CIDSE to Agroecology Now! on how we can ‘make money move for agroecology’. We make the case for reforming the way agricultural and food systems development is financed so we can achieve the transformations that we desperately need.

Drawing on the collective intelligence of leading agroecologists and donors, we identify twelve different areas through which donors can focus their methods and approach to financing to support more just and sustainable food systems. These are organised through five sets of recommendations:

1. Engage in iterative reflection and examination of donor practices;
2. Transform relationships between funders and recipients;
3. Change funding modalities, methodologies and foci for delivering funding;
4. Create and adopt more appropriate measurement and evaluation tools;
5. Address the big picture issues that undermine a more just and sustainable food system, including especially shifting funding away from detrimental forms of agriculture.

Read on to learn more...



This policy briefing follows on our first publication "[Finance for agroecology: more just than a dream? An assessment of European and international institutions' contributions to food system transformation](#)" that focused on the quantity of European and international institutions' contributions to food system transformation. See box 2 for more details.

WHY DO WE NEED TO MAKE MONEY MOVE?

THE URGENCY OF TODAY'S ECOLOGICAL AND SOCIAL CRISES DEMANDS BOLD CHANGE IN FOOD SYSTEMS

We urgently need to transform food systems and we need to do it before it is too late. The depth of the ecological and social threats we are facing is staggering¹. A range of high-profile UN and scientific reports have shown how the global food system is failing to nourish people around the world and at the same time is directly linked to growing inequality, injustice, ill-health, climate breakdown and biodiversity collapse². Meeting the goals set in the Paris Agreement and the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development requires a dramatic transformation of how we organise food systems.

To many, it is clear that agroecology (see box 1) is the best approach to guide this transformation and is widely viewed as an approach that is well suited to family farmers and — with proper support — is a vital approach to confront the ecological crises of our time and to address the Sustainable Development Goals³. Adopting agroecology as a paradigm for the future of food systems is a bold transformation that is becoming increasingly attractive, viable and urgent.

It is also now clear that both the quality and quantity of how we finance agricultural research and development, and food security is woefully inadequate.

- » First, there is a huge shortfall in the amount of funding for sustainable food systems generally. Further, very little of that funding is allocated to small scale-farmers who produce the majority of the food consumed in the world^{4 5};
- » Second, even within the already inadequate funding for agricultural development, almost all of this funding is allocated to encouraging farmers to adopt detrimental forms of high-energy, high-input industrial agriculture. A growing body of research has shown how agroecology is significantly marginalised in the financial architecture of development at all levels (see box 2). There is a clear need to shift more funds towards agroecology;

» Third, funding that is allocated towards sustainable agriculture and agroecology is often delivered in unhelpful and even damaging ways.

This policy briefing focuses on point three, and goes beyond a call for more funding to address a more specific question: **When donors do decide to target sustainable agroecological food systems, how can we transform the modes and approaches of financing so that it actually enables agroecology?** Transforming public and philanthropic finance will enable agroecology to achieve its unmet potential as a vital approach to confronting our global challenges.

Box 1: What is agroecology? What are its benefits?

Agroecology is a way of redesigning and managing food systems, “from the farm to the table, with a goal of achieving ecological, economic, and social sustainability”⁶ by applying a series of principles. Such principles have been captured in the FAO 10 elements of agroecology to guide the transition towards sustainable agriculture and food systems as well as in the HLPE (High Level Panel of Experts on Food Security and Nutrition) consolidated set of 13 agroecological principles⁷. The latter draws on CIDSE’s “Principles of Agroecology” which highlight the environmental, economic, social and political dimensions of agroecology.

A growing body of research has provided evidence of the multifunctional benefits of agroecology, from improving yield and profitability to enhancing agricultural biodiversity, climate mitigation and adaptation, providing diverse nutritious food to enabling gender equity⁸. Importantly, it is an approach to agriculture that respects local knowledge and cultures, builds capacity in place and uplifts the voices and agency of food producers and citizens and thus has multiple cultural, social and political benefits, adapted to peoples and ecologies in specific places/contextes.

¹ Bradshaw, C.J.A., Ehrlich, P.R., Beattie, A., Ceballos, G., Crist, E., Diamond, J., et al. (2021), Underestimating the Challenges of Avoiding a Ghastly Future. *Frontiers in Conservation Science* 1(9). doi: 10.3389/fcsc.2020.615419.

² IPCC (2019), IPCC Special Report on Climate Change, Desertification, Land Degradation, Sustainable Land Management, Food Security, and Greenhouse gas fluxes in Terrestrial Ecosystems. <https://www.ipcc.ch/site/assets/uploads/2019/11/SRCCL-Full-Report-Compiled-191128.pdf>.

³ HLPE. (2019), Agroecological and other innovative approaches for sustainable agriculture and food systems that enhance food security and nutrition. <http://www.fao.org/3/ca5602en/ca5602en.pdf>. FAO. (2018), Scaling up Agroecology Initiative: Transforming Food and Agricultural Systems in Support of the SDGs. <http://www.fao.org/3/i9049en/i9049en.pdf>. BIOVISION, FiBL. (2020), The potential of agroecology to build climate-resilient livelihoods and food systems. <http://www.fao.org/3/cb0438en/CB0438EN.pdf>.

⁴ IFAD website. https://www.ifad.org/documents/38714170/42157470/climate-finance-gap_smallscale_agr.pdf/34b2e25b-7572-b31d-6d0c-d5ea5ea8f96f.

⁵ CERES2030 website, [CERES2030 report](https://www.ceres2030.org/).

⁶ Gliessman S. (2016), Transforming food systems with agroecology, *Agroecology and Sustainable Food Systems*, p.187-189. <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/21683565.2015.1130765>.

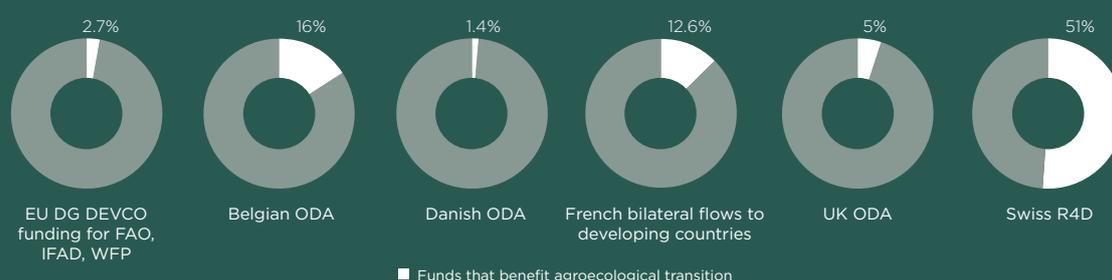
⁷ HLPE (2019), Agroecological and other innovative approaches for sustainable agriculture and food systems that enhance food security and nutrition, p.41. <http://www.fao.org/3/ca5602en/ca5602en.pdf>.

⁸ Anderson, C.R., Bruil, J., Chappell, M.J., Kiss, C., and Pimbert, M.P. (2021), Origins, Benefits and the Political Basis of Agroecology. In *Agroecology Now!: Transformations Towards More Just and Sustainable Food Systems*, p.11-28. Palgrave. https://link.springer.com/chapter/10.1007/978-3-030-61315-0_2.

Box 2: The mounting evidence showing the lack of financing for agroecology from national and international donors



THE NEED FOR FOOD SYSTEM TRANSFORMATION IS RECOGNISED AT ALL LEVELS. DONORS COULD SHIFT FINANCE IN THE RIGHT DIRECTION AND INCREASE SUPPORT FOR AGROECOLOGY.



For further information you can consult the following pages:
agroecology-pool.org/moneyflowsreport - cidse.org/finance-for-agroecology-more-just-than-a-dream

A plethora of recent reports have assessed public financial flows for agriculture revealing a glaring gap in terms of finance for agroecology. Our previous briefing in this series (*Finance for agroecology: more than just a dream?*) reported on research that showed that 0% of the European Union funds channeled through FAO, IFAD and the WFP between 2016 and 2018 supported transformative agroecology (see box 3) while only 2.7% had a focus on substituting harmful inputs and practices with less degrading ones⁹. Other reports have provided a similarly bleak picture whereby data from the United Kingdom¹⁰, Germany¹¹, France¹², Belgium¹³, Denmark¹⁴, Kenya¹⁵, The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation¹⁶ and the USA¹⁷ are all showing similar trends. The case of Switzerland seems to be the exception where a study showed that 51% of Swiss-funded agricultural research for development projects had agroecological components (although the depth of these ‘agroecology’ approaches is not clear from the research)¹⁸. The situation is similar in terms of climate finance as we found out that a mere 10.6% of the total invested in agricultural projects by the Green Climate Fund was supportive of transformative agroecology and very little funds overall are aimed at redesigning food and farming systems¹⁹.

⁹ Moeller, N.I. (2020), Analysis of Funding Flows to Agroecology: the case of European Union monetary flows to the United Nations’ Rome-based agencies and the case of the Green Climate Fund. <https://www.cidse.org/2020/09/28/analysis-of-funding-flows-to-agroecology/>.

¹⁰ Pimbert, M. & Moeller, N. (2018), Absent Agroecology Aid: On UK Agricultural Development Assistance Since 2010. *Sustainability*. <https://www.mdpi.com/2071-1050/10/2/505/htm>.

¹¹ Agrar Koordination., Agrecol., Aktion gegen den Hunger., ARA., Aktion Agrar., ABL., et al. (2019), Jahresbilanz Agrarökologie: Analyse ein Jahr nach Veröffentlichung des Positionspapiers „Agrarökologie stärken“. https://www.inkota.de/fileadmin/user_upload/Presse/Pressemitteilungen/Agrarökologie2020_Bilanzpapier.pdf.

¹² CCFD Terre Solidaire website,- <https://ccfd-terresolidaire.org/nos-combats/souverainete/agroecologie-agro-industrie-investissements-francais-soutiennent>.

¹³ Coalition Contre la Faim (2020), Pour une aide publique au développement belge qui soutienne la transition agroécologique. https://yes2agroecology.be/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/CCF-PolicyBrief-ABP-Agroecologie-Juin2020_FR-Web.pdf and Vermeylen M., De Schutter O. (2020), The share of agroecology in Belgian Official Development Assistance: an opportunity missed. https://yes2agroecology.be/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/CRIDHO-WP-2020-3_ODeSchutter_Share-Agroecology-Belgian.pdf.

¹⁴ Vermeylen, M. (2020), Sustainability starts from the Ground. https://www.agroecologynow.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/DCA_sustainability-starts-from-the-ground_20.pdf.

¹⁵ Biovision Foundation for Ecological Development & IPES-Food (2020), Money Flows: What is holding back investment in agroecological research for Africa? Biovision Foundation for Ecological Development & International Panel of Experts on Sustainable Food Systems. <https://www.agroecology-pool.org/moneyflowsreport/>.

¹⁶ Biovision Foundation for Ecological Development & IPES-Food (2020), Money Flows: What is holding back investment in agroecological research for Africa? Biovision Foundation for Ecological Development & International Panel of Experts on Sustainable Food Systems. <https://www.agroecology-pool.org/moneyflowsreport/>.

¹⁷ DeLonge, M.S., Miles, A., Carlisle, L. (2016). Investing in the transition to sustainable agriculture, p. 266-273. *Environmental Science & Policy*. <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S1462901115300812>.

¹⁸ Biovision Foundation for Ecological Development & IPES-Food (2020), Money Flows: What is holding back investment in agroecological research for Africa? Biovision Foundation for Ecological Development & International Panel of Experts on Sustainable Food Systems. <https://www.agroecology-pool.org/moneyflowsreport/>.

¹⁹ Moeller, N.I. (2020), Analysis of Funding Flows to Agroecology: the case of European Union monetary flows to the United Nations’ Rome-based agencies and the case of the Green Climate Fund. <https://www.cidse.org/2020/09/28/analysis-of-funding-flows-to-agroecology/>.

FINANCING TRANSFORMATION REQUIRES A COMPLEX ENGAGEMENT WITH SOCIAL, POLITICAL, CULTURAL AND ECOLOGICAL PROCESSES

A transformative approach that puts people and planet first, requires much more than simply tweaking the farming practices of individual farmers, supporting a particular sector, investing in technology or making new innovations available to food producers. Many approaches stop at minor tweaks like integrating farmers into new value chains or supporting the adoption of a new practice and assume this will strengthen their position; but this thinking lacks a deeper understanding and systemic approach. Indeed, there is a growing agreement that transformation requires a systems approach that focuses not only on technical and practical changes but that vitally also addresses the social and political dimensions of change.

In contrast to many top-down solutions that focus on market-driven, technology-centric and corporate-led ‘solutions’, agroecology emphasises the voice and agency of family farmers and other food producers. This forms the basis for redesigning farming and food systems for ecological and social regeneration.

Many have been demanding that financing for agriculture move beyond the dominant productivist and technology-focused approaches and foster a “transformative agroecology” which involves transforming policies, values, connecting urban-and-rural peoples based on the principles of agroecology (see box 3).

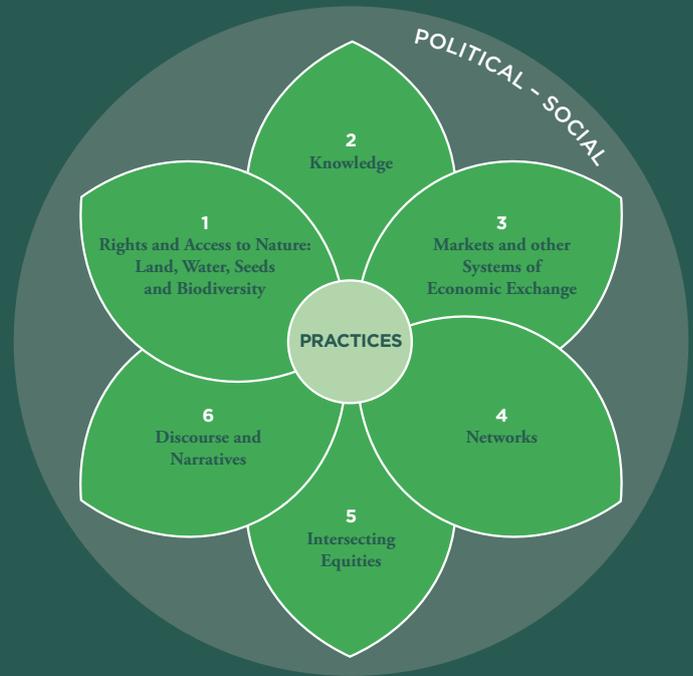
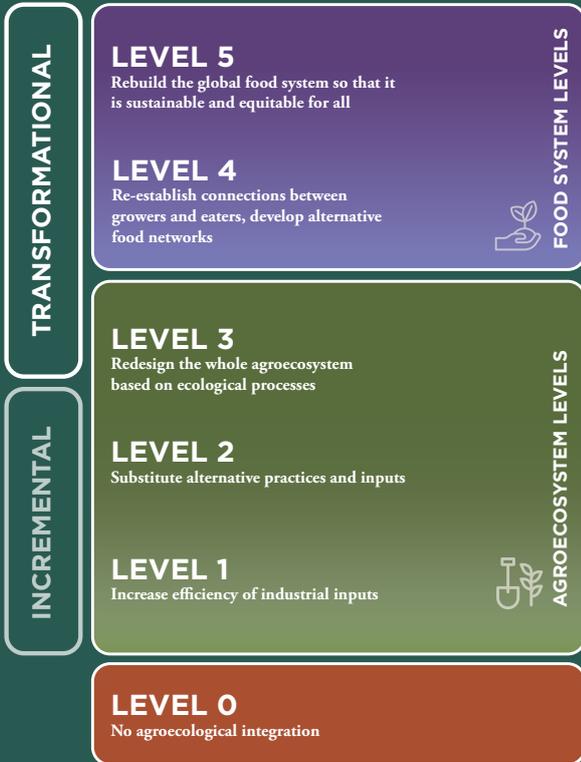
NOT ONLY MORE, BUT ALSO BETTER: THE QUALITY AND METHOD OF FINANCING AS THE RECIPE FOR FOOD SYSTEM TRANSFORMATION

Interest in agroecology is growing and it is increasingly being translated into policies and budget lines. Thus, in addition to channeling more money towards agroecology we need to make better use of the funds when they are allocated. The current architecture of financing for agriculture is often, “structurally unable to support small, locally-based investment opportunities... is archaic, inflexible and structured in such a way as to prevent these kinds of businesses and producers to thrive.... Most tend to focus on scale and replication that is not tailored to the local environment”²⁰.

It is clear that financing for agroecology needs an entirely different approach, but what would this look like? How do we get beyond “business as usual”? What kinds of changes in approach and mechanisms are needed to ‘make money move for agroecology’? This policy briefing is based on a research commissioned by CIDSE to Agroecology Now! that asked participants to comment generally about the dynamics of financing for agroecology and focused largely on development funding through philanthropic and public donors.

²⁰ Astone, J. (2018), Investing in food systems: Gaps in capital, analysis and leadership. <https://swiftfoundation.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/2018-Astone-Investing-in-Food-Systems-1.pdf>

Box 3: Two ways to help us think about transformation



Left: Biovision’s ACT tool builds on FAO’s 10 elements of agroecology and Steve Gliessman’s levels of sustainable food systems. Transformative agroecology moves beyond the farm-level incremental changes in practices (levels 1 and 2) towards more transformative change (levels 3 and 4) that emphasise the political and the social dimensions of change.

Right: Anderson et al. argue that agroecology transformations require addressing issues of power, control and governance and centering social and political action for systemic change across six different domains of transformation. This simultaneously requires: a) deconstructing the existing food regime that disables agroecology; b) nurturing agroecology (by empowering grassroots and people-led processes).

RESEARCH FINDINGS

DIMENSIONS FOR FINANCING TRANSFORMATION

This research involved 19 interviews and 4 focus group sessions with 35 donors working on agroecology (governments, philanthropic funds, northern NGOs, international institutions) as well as recipient-experts (southern and northern CSOs and movements, academia, international institutions). The analysis developed 12 different areas through which to better understand the contours and dimensions of financing transformative agroecology (see table 1). Each area exists along a spectrum from “working against” to “working for” transformative agroecology (see this [link](#) for more details on the full research).

Participants in the research repeatedly emphasised a shift towards collective processes, led by civil society organisations and food producers that brought equity and rights to the fore and that addressed the political, cultural and social in concert with the practical dimensions of change. While these approaches to funding were present in the experiences and approaches of the donors and communities represented in our research, they are rare in the wider landscape of development aid and face substantial challenges. These are addressed in more detail across the policy recommendations in the next section.

Table 1: Overview of results from the research

Works against transformative agroecology		Works for transformative agroecology
Approach and governance of financing		
No co-governance mechanisms	-----	Mechanisms for co-governance
One-way accountability	-----	Co-accountability
Cookie-cutter approach	-----	Bespoke approach built from the ground up with local stakeholders
Farm-level approach only	-----	Territorial approach and multi-scale
Short term, one-off funding	-----	Long term, phased approaches
Focuses on technical practices to increase production or efficiency	-----	Focuses on improving farm design to deliver social, ecological, political and cultural benefits
Disregards political dimensions of transition	-----	Incorporates action to address political dimensions of change
Intervention: top-down involvement of institutional actors, policy-makers and scientists	-----	Dialogues and collaboration: enrolling institutional actors, policy-makers and scientists in agroecological projects
Rigid monitoring and evaluation looking for narrow short-term indicators of benefit	-----	Flexible multi-dimensions, long term, participatory monitoring and evaluation
Humanitarian as a crisis response	-----	Humanitarian as a transformation
Big Picture		
Equity-blind	-----	Confronts intersecting dimensions of equity
Agroecology as niche	-----	Agroecology as central
Ignores wider systemic problems	-----	Addresses the disabling dynamics of wider systems
Dismissive of local knowledge; top down approach to knowledge, learning, research and innovation	-----	Embraces a dialogue of a diversity of knowledges; peer-to-peer learning, participatory research and development

More information on the [full research](#).

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on our analysis of these areas, we propose five sets of recommendations that can help move donors towards more transformative approaches to financing agroecology.

RECOMMENDATION SET #1: ENGAGE IN ITERATIVE REFLECTION AND EXAMINATION OF DONOR PRACTICES

We recommend that donors engage in an ongoing evaluation to:

- a) Examine and increase the quantity of funds that are allocated towards agroecology (see Policy briefing 1: [Finance for agroecology: more than just a dream?](#));
- b) Examine their approach to funding, using tools such as table 1 to think critically about the nature of funding approaches and programmes, and how that relates to their organisational theory of change:

» **Include farmers and communities in this process:** this is best done in dialogue with food producers and organisations to ensure these reflections and the resulting adaptations are grounded in their realities and priorities.

» **Socialise this process:** engage with communities of practice including donors, critical friends and other actors working to reimagine and reshape agricultural financing.

RECOMMENDATION SET #2: TRANSFORMING RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN FUNDERS AND RECIPIENTS

» **Co-governance:** be accountable to food producers, their organisations and movements by establishing participatory and multi-stakeholder governance of funding agencies, donor organisations and projects. Make sure there is a reciprocal accountability between donors and recipients. Some refer to this as a process of co-governance.

» **Participatory decision-making:** establish and adopt direct and innovative ways for the genuine participation of food producers – and more specifically of women food producers – and their organisations in the design, implementation and evaluation of programmes and projects. This can be through programme advisory committees, having donors and communities on governing bodies. It can also be done by establishing grants managed by communities themselves that give the community financial agency.

This has been referred to as solidarity ‘revolving funds’ where food producers and their organisations have their own pot of money to regrant.

» **Be connected to the places and processes you are funding:** agroecological transitions are specific to the place they occur in and are a part of much wider political and historic processes. Donors need to be mindful of the historical context in place. The most effective donors were well connected in the places they were granting funds to and had developed long-term trust-based relationships with recipients.



We have a complex network of advisors, with eyes and ears to the ground. [Donor interviewee]

RECOMMENDATION SET #3: CHANGE FUNDING MODALITIES, METHODOLOGIES AND FOCI FOR DELIVERING FUNDING

» **Decentralise access to funding; focus on small-mid scale funding programmes through civil society organisations closer to the ground:** the large-scale grants that are often made through large funding programmes are mostly unsuitable for the scale of agroecology initiatives and projects. More funds need to be allocated to small-medium sized organisations and networks in civil society – especially organisations of small-scale food producers working at a community and territorial level. Ensure that control over decision-making and access to funds sits with those most directly affected by and best able to identify strategies to cope with current and future crises.

» **Provide long-term funding:** processes of transformation take place over long periods of time and require long-term commitments from donors. For example, one well-regarded donor provides funds for up to 10-12 years, using phases in a longer-term process that shifts from more contained interventions/projects to a more holistic project approach. Part of the challenge is that donors are expecting long-term outcomes (visible over 10-15 years) while funding short term projects (3-4 years) which they expect will already yield concrete results.

- » **Allow for flexibility:** agroecology transitions are complex and often messy processes that are best supported by funders that allow for flexibility and adaptation throughout the granting process so that grantees can respond to emerging issues and opportunities.
- » **Evaluate through an equity lens all funding programmes:** programmes should focus on explicitly addressing inequity related to gender, class, caste, disability, ethnicity and other dimensions of difference. Failing to evaluate through an explicit equity lens is highly likely to exacerbate inequity.
- » **Where farm-level interventions are concerned, focus on supporting farm re-design:** farm-level interventions should focus on re-designing processes (level 3), not minor tweaks or input substitution (levels 1-2).
- » **Focus on collective territorial processes:** move from individual technical support to supporting transformation of farm-level practices [and beyond] as a part of wider civil society processes. Any funding to enhance practices should be embedded in collective, social processes including farmer-led, participatory research, peer-to-peer learning and community seed systems, customary laws and biocultural practices, etc. Funding programmes should be targeted at multiple levels of transition, included multiple “domains of transformation” (see box 2) and include a systemic and integrated approach. Transitions at farm level should be integrated into broader socio-cultural, economic and political process of transformation and civil society organising at the local and territorial levels.
- » **Focus on ‘immaterial’ interventions, political work and movement building:** these processes are vital to long term transformation, yet are often undervalued. Examples include: dialogues; awareness raising; knowledge sharing exchanges; strengthening peasants, womens’ and farmers’ organisations, cooperative structures; building synergies in funding between research, movements and practice; agroecological education through agroecology hubs; supporting communities of practice and agroecology schools; and investing in intergenerational and intercultural learning.



It’s a transformative perspective, and we’re talking about not only rural areas, but agrifood systems. How to change structurally the agrifood system is not a technical but a political question.

[Interviewee from the Global South]

- » **Ensure that food producers are the protagonists:** funding is often led by ‘experts’, institutional actors and policy-makers. Agroecological transitions are best enabled through funding

that enables the protagonism/agency of food producers and their organisations where these other actors are rather the ‘supporting cast’. Focus on funding participatory processes led by food producer organisations and civil society in territories. Pay particular attention to power dynamics between actors and within communities to ensure that gender equal and culturally appropriate change methodologies are applied.

- » **Strengthen farmer organisations** and introduce budget lines granting directly them and their own initiatives – especially organisations led by women, youth, and Indigenous food provisioners.

RECOMMENDATION SET #4: CREATE AND ADOPT MORE APPROPRIATE MEASUREMENT AND EVALUATION TOOLS

- » **Evaluate and adapt monitoring and evaluation processes:** develop and/or work with commonly agreed measurement and evaluation tools for agroecology and embed them in programmes to enable to document performance of agroecology. Many of the current approaches to monitoring and evaluation of funding programmes are highly problematic because they prioritise short-term outcomes and milestones, lock projects into rigid plans (through tools such as log frames), fail to account for the social, political and cultural dimensions of agroecology and are incapable of taking a view of long-term transformation processes.
- » **Adopt participatory assessments:** redesign and develop innovative ‘monitoring and evaluation’ methodologies that allow communities to develop their own metrics of change and of resilience, to assess their own change processes and based on their own ways of knowing.

RECOMMENDATION SET #5: ADDRESS THE BIG PICTURE ISSUES THAT UNDERMINE A MORE JUST AND SUSTAINABLE FOOD SYSTEM

Whereas recommendation sets #1-4 focus on adapting the quality and focus of donor practices, a range of more profound and wide-ranging big picture issues are vital to consider.

- » **Move agroecology into the centre, rather than the periphery of the funding portfolio:** agroecology has been marginally supported and donors are considering how to shift towards agroecology. Learn from donors and peers who are funding or receiving funds, to apply methodologies that allow the mainstreaming of agroecology in international

assistance envelopes. This also includes integrating agroecology components into other, potentially larger funding envelopes relating to climate change, gender, sustainable livelihoods and community economic development.

- » Ensure **that systemic political and cultural change is a central target for change:** changing the quantity and quality of money flows is a necessary but insufficient condition to food system transformation. Such objective need to be accompanied by “political, socio-cultural, economic, environmental and technological shifts in rules, practices, institutions and values, leading to more sustainable modes of production and consumption”²¹. This calls for “major shifts in policies at international, national and local levels and the active encouragement of innovation across these scales”²². It is vital to promote food system governance and policy making from local to global levels which builds on the inclusive and transparent participation of public(s) in policy making – taking into account power imbalances by explicitly focusing on bringing the voices of often excluded groups and priorities to the fore.



We can't keep just funding African CSOs to be fighting this goliath in our backyard! We need to do our part; to clean up our backyard and erode the influence [some actors] are having in Africa.

[Interviewee]

- » **Repurposing funding and policies to shift away from funding detrimental forms of agriculture and development** which are not supportive of transformative agroecology is equally important as increasing funding and policies in favor of agroecology. Many of our research participants pointed out the vital need to stop funding and supporting industrial agriculture, which can cancel out any gains made by the (also vital) agroecology-focused funding. Donors should also shift resources away from false solutions, such as carbon farming and climate smart agriculture.



It is clear there are so many investments damaging what agroecology proposes to revitalise. [Focus group]

- » **Always incorporate a transformative perspective, even in the midst of crises:** as crises are part of our day-to-day life, how can we connect what is usually a “humanitarian response” with transformative responses and projects? Sometimes crises represent ‘change moments’ that open up pathways to accelerate the transition to a more equitable system²³.

- » **Transform professional culture:** the ways of working and worldviews of professionals in institutions, science and policy-making have been identified widely as highly problematic in terms of creating a top-down dynamic that is antithetical to agroecology. Professional culture needs to be transformed to refocus on giving a central place to the agency, voice and wisdom of people, food producers and their organisations. This entails a greater focus on transdisciplinary approaches, farmer-led interventions, genuine participation and ‘dialogues of knowledge’.

- » **Beware that agroecology itself doesn't exclude and marginalise:** in the absence of an approach rooted in feminism, equity and radical participation, agroecology in the development machine risks reproducing exclusive, colonial and oppressive relationships with peoples in different contexts. Many vital approaches in different territories are carried out using language and worldviews that do not use the language of agroecology.



Agroecology cannot be another tool for colonisation. It has to be congruent with our cosmovisions. [Interviewee]

- » Agroecology, in its transformative form, is deeply attuned and emergent from particular people in particular places (territories) with their languages, cosmovisions and life-worlds. Agroecology is fundamentally about respecting and enabling this and programmes and development must not force peoples into cookie-cutter approaches driven by the Global North.



We have to begin by recognising that other approaches [e.g. indigenous sovereignty] that exist must be valued in their own right. Only then they can decide best ways to support how to understand agroecology. [Interviewee]

²¹ Wezel, A., Gemmil Herren, B., Bezner Kerr, R., Barrios, E., Goncalves, A.L.R., Sinclair, F. (2020), Agroecological principles and elements and their implications for transitioning to sustainable food systems. A review. *Agroecology for Sustainable Development*. https://link.springer.com/epdf/10.1007/s13593-020-00646-z?sharing_token=8TRAZ-3J2NY4ygr4pD3wPe4RwlQNchNByi7wbcMAY7Rk2D83wAA4ifMHmrZ6os5hzvUyUN0nhCce7WvbSo0uwTwB4_Ej3I1tB7S0V8fDRD32qwm6xu1Y-WGMMKhZta-3fPLKesKhKbMwZt2dY7JQ9brc3mJGyA1HVERiWf0%3D.

²² HLPE (2019), Agroecological and other innovative approaches for sustainable agriculture and food systems that enhance food security and nutrition. <http://www.fao.org/3/ca5602en/ca5602en.pdf>.

²³ Mier, M., Cacho, T.G., Giraldo, O.F., Aldasoro, M., Morales, H., Ferguson, B.G., Rosset, P., Khadse, A., Campos, C. (2018), Bringing agroecology to scale: key drivers and emblematic cases. <https://foodfirst.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/Mier-Terán-et-al-ENG-1.pdf>.

CONCLUSION: FUND MORE, FUND BETTER

Food systems transformation for social justice and sustainability requires collective and concerted efforts from food producers, organisations, movements, governments, researchers, international institutions and other actors. The recommendations in this policy briefing provide key ingredients that help different kinds of actors involved in financing agriculture to reflect on their practices, and build their own recipe for supporting transformation in food systems through agroecology.

To fully grasp the details of this analysis, we recommend the reader to dive into the in-depth research report published [here](#).

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