



## Overview

The co-creation of knowledge in agroecological processes is one of the most important tenets to achieve more ecologically sound and socially just food systems. Knowledge that is place-based, transdisciplinary, critical, and open-access is considered critical to agroecology, an approach to sustainable agriculture premised on blending ecological science with farmers' traditional and experiential knowledge (Bezner Kerr et al., 2023; HLPE, 2019; Méndez et al., 2015). Further, knowledge for sustainable food system transition requires different forms of knowledge that can be engendered through participatory action research and farmer-centered approaches, including farmer-to-farmer methods and farmer research networks (Méndez et al., 2017; Richardson et al., 2021; Utter et al., 2021). While the concept of “knowledge co-creation” is widely used, there is limited empirical research about the challenges, opportunities, and lessons learned in agroecological co-creation processes. This study focuses on **the processes of co-creation of knowledge in agroecology within farmer research networks, and similar initiatives, which support agroecological transitions in smallholder farming contexts**. To understand these knowledge co-creation processes, we will seek to answer the overarching questions guiding this research:

1. In what ways do farmer-centered research projects and smallholder farmer research networks (FRNs), and other similar initiatives, understand and engage in knowledge co-creation in agroecology processes?
2. What agroecology principles are manifest/upheld through the co-creation of knowledge in farmer research networks and other similar initiatives?
3. How is the co-creation of agroecological knowledge nested within historical, socio-political-ecological, and scalar contexts and relationships?

As part of the project outcomes, we will be able to:

1. Discuss and compare how the co-creation of knowledge in agroecology is understood by different actors in different geographies and contexts.
2. Discuss impacts that various approaches to knowledge co-creation have had in agroecology research, practice, and policy/movements.
3. Describe the challenges and opportunities associated with the co-creation of knowledge in agroecology.
4. Draw lessons learned from these cases and share them with those engaged in agroecology and food systems transformations at the local, national and global scales.

This study will use a Participatory Action Research approach that engages multiple stakeholders in the research process. We are collaborating with local partners to conduct case studies in East Africa, West Africa, and the South American Andes.

- In West Africa, we are collaborating with Association Nourrir Sans Détruire, and Groundswell International, to understand the ways that the region's political and environmental transformations are shaping people's approach to co-creation of knowledge. We ask what form of agroecological transition is possible in this challenging context of protracted insecurity and climate change, given Burkina Faso's historical, social, and political economic context.
- In the Andes, we are collaborating with Promoción de la Sustentabilidad y Conocimientos Compartidos (PROSUCO) to understand more about how relational processes of co-creation emerge, how these processes are shaped by power dynamics, and how different actors' interests are negotiated. This study explores the nuances and potential distinction between a "dialogue of knowledges" approach and other co-creative approaches in farmer-researcher collaborations. This study is situated in the Bolivian historical, socio-cultural, political, and economic contexts shaping agroecology across the region.
- In East Africa, we are exploring collaborations with a growing agroecology coalition in Western Uganda. The region is characterized by agroforestry systems alongside protected forest areas. Our study would seek to understand the potential for agroecological agroforestry, including afforestation with indigenous tree species, in the context of grassroots networks shaping the movement.
- In East Africa, we are collaborating with PELUM-Kenya to explore the ways that co-creation of knowledge across scales intersects with the roll-out of the 2024-2033 National Agroecology for Food Systems Transformation Strategy (NAFSTS) revision to the Kenyan Constitution. The strategy calls for a transition not just of practices, but also a shift in power relations and epistemological foundations for Kenya's agriculture, agricultural communities, and food systems more broadly.
- Other case studies are being explored across these regions.

Our proposed research approach includes desk-review of project documents, key informant interviews, listening sessions, and workshops using various co-creative and participatory approaches. We seek to develop collaborative relationships with agroecology project stakeholders, to refine the questions and research design, do data collection and reflection, and intended outcomes.

In addition to the project outcomes above, we are in dialog with our program partners to discuss benefits that they would like to see from this collaborative research, which could include:

- Training, networking and fundraising, amplifying the work of the project through IFA publications, and media outreach for the participating project;
- Training on our research approach at CoP, workshopping lessons learned with the CoP, amplifying the work of the CoP through IfA publications, and media outreach with the Regional Teams;
- Socializing the lessons learned with a global audience, amplifying the work of CRFS through IfA publications, media and narrative for CRFS.

## RESEARCH CO-LEADS:



**Ernesto Méndez** - *Co-Director, Institute for Agroecology Professor of Agroecology, Department of Agriculture, Landscape and Environment*  
Ernesto's research and teaching focus on agroecology, agrifood systems, smallholder coffee systems, participatory action research (PAR), and transdisciplinary research approaches. He has over 25 years of experience working with smallholder farmers and Indigenous communities in Latin America and collaborating in agroecology efforts across the world.



**Emily Baker** - *Postdoctoral Associate*  
Emily is a rural and environmental sociologist and applied ecologist whose research focuses on agroecology, environmental conservation, knowledge co-creation and meaning-making, and complex socio-environmental crises. She has over ten years' experience working in Central and Eastern Africa, including work with farmer networks and Participatory Action Research.

## SUPPORTING RESEARCH TEAM:



**Colin Anderson** - *Co-Director, Institute for Agroecology, Associate Research Professor, Agroecology, Landscape, and Environment*  
Colin's work focuses on community- and people-led processes of transformation for resilience, social justice and well-being. He works with communities, networks and organizations in social movements who are organizing to confront intersecting crises we face today and who are reimagining and building alternatives. Colin is committed to engaged and participatory research, learning and action in his methodology and pedagogy.



**Gabriela Bucini** - *Research Associate*  
Gabriela's work has been centered on collective practices that sustain transdisciplinary research and just food systems. She is part of the Agroecology Support Team in the Global Collaboration for Resilient Food Systems (CRFS) program. She has experience in West Africa teaching praxis courses in agroecology.



**Amaya Carrasco-Torrontegui** - *Postdoctoral Associate*  
Amaya's work focuses on applied, participatory and transdisciplinary research with grassroots organizations, NGOs and academia in the intersection of agroecology, climate change, food justice and urban agriculture. She recently completed her dissertation using Participatory Action Research to understand collective action in the context of agroecological transition in Ecuador and Bolivia.