

# POWERING MORE JUST AND SUSTAINABLE FOOD SYSTEMS



**Our food systems are in crisis.** Industrial agriculture is one of the leading causes of climate change and health inequity around the world, but it is not the only path ahead of us. Agroecology offers a different future, one where we work together to regenerate the environment, cool the planet, tackle inequity and ensure good, healthy food for all.

The [UVM Institute for Agroecology \(IFA\)](#) is mobilizing knowledge to advance the transition towards more equitable and sustainable food systems. The IFA uses a holistic approach to understand complex systems and tackle the root causes of today's problems, engaging agroecology and food sovereignty to challenge the status quo and open new pathways to better futures. Our work spans from local to global through the integration of research, learning, and action. This reach across geographies gives the Institute a unique and interconnected perspective, allowing us to cross-pollinate ideas and innovations and to leverage change.

## What Is Agroecology?

**"Agroecology"** is a way of powering change in food systems using social, ecological, and political principles to regenerate our ecosystems and create a more just society. It is rooted in Indigenous practices and ancestral knowledge, which are combined with scientific knowledge to address the current food crises. Agroecology is not only about changing farming techniques, but also about transforming policy, science, cultures, and economies to bring about more just food systems.

# Why IFA?

Globally, the acceptance and applications of agroecology are growing, but there is a need to amplify agroecology in the “belly of the beast”: the United States, birthplace of industrial agriculture. With an established track record in food systems research, the University of Vermont is well positioned to foster a globally connected Institute rooted in the Northeastern United States. Drawing from experience at home and abroad, the Institute for Agroecology works with local, national, and international partners to deepen our understanding of agroecology and expand its application.



**The IFA is powering agroecological transitions through six strategies:**



**Research:** Undertake critical, transdisciplinary, and participatory action research to uncover new ideas and strategies for redesigning food systems.



**Convene:** Bring together key actors within and outside of academia to cross-pollinate ideas and relationships across local, national, and international networks.



**Amplify:** Develop creative communication and advocacy strategies to influence policy, narratives, hearts, and minds.



**Educate:** Prepare the next generation of agroecologists through undergraduate, graduate, community-based, and professional learning programs.



**Activate:** Support local economic, ecological, social, and cultural processes to grow agroecology on the ground in Vermont and around the globe.



**Influence:** Leverage our position and power to advance transformative agroecology, establishing its legitimacy in policies and institutions.

# How We Work

As an academic institute and center for action and learning, our work is grounded in a participatory action research approach. That means that we do research with and for farmers, Indigenous people, movements and communities who are driving just transitions in food systems. We invite students, partners and funders to join our work growing the field of agroecology.



# Our Programs



## High-Impact Learning Opportunities

We offer fellowship programs, international placements, courses and hands-on learning opportunities for undergraduate students who contribute through their applied learning to community agroecology projects in Vermont and beyond.



## Agroecology Support Program

The Institute provides support to influential institutions, funders, policy-makers, organizations and researchers/educators in the Global North and South through advice, strategic planning, and training, to bring transformative agroecology into their work.



## Agroecology Summits and Convenings

We host high-profile regional, national, and international summits of leading agroecologists, assembling social movements, scientists, funders, farmers, and institutions. This raises the profile of agroecology and creates new partnerships, innovations, and cross-pollination.



## Transdisciplinary Research for

### Agroecology Transitions

UVM faculty and students use Participatory Action Research processes to advance agroecological transitions in Vermont, Africa, Latin America, Europe and beyond.



## Global Agroecology Leadership Program

We bring together annual cohorts of diverse agroecologists to build leadership and capacity in organizing, networking, research and engagement. This work widens and strengthens our global network of leading agroecologists.



## Influencing Policies and Institutions

The Institute uses its position, evidence-base, and partnerships to influence local, regional national and global policies and institutions to support the growth and spread of transformative agroecology.



## Shifting Narratives for Transformative Agroecology

Through initiatives such as a global magazine (*Rooted*), high-impact publications, social media campaigning, and collaborating with high-profile media influencers, we are weaving a narrative to amplify agroecology.



## Advancing Agroecology in the Belly of the Beast

In partnership with grassroots organizers, we are advancing agroecology across the United States, one of the centers of industrial agriculture. Through acting in solidarity with activists and pursuing of opportunities for policymaking and advocacy, we are advancing agroecology on the front lines.



## Our Approach

The Institute builds on a decade of work on agroecology at UVM and is fueled by an international network, community of practice and a strong basis of support in our home state of Vermont. The Institute is co-directed by Colin Anderson and Ernesto Méndez and is driven by a core team whose complementary expertise and commitment provide a solid foundation to advance the mission of the Institute. The Institute will be guided by a diverse advisory board made up of agroecology and food systems leaders from across the globe.

## Our Values

**We have three key pillars for our work at the IFA**

- 1. We are pursuing Just Transformations in food systems** by prioritizing long-term, systems-level work rather than quick fixes.
- 2. We focus on Participatory Action Research approaches**, working in partnership with impacted communities, farmers and other local stakeholders.
- 3. We center equity in everything that we do** by working against exploitative land and labor relations, gender and racial inequality, and colonial patterns of extraction between the global North and South.

**JOIN US IN BUILDING  
JUST AND SUSTAINABLE  
FOOD SYSTEMS.**

Learn more at:  
[UVM Institute for Agroecology \(IFA\)](http://uvm.edu/ifa)



Email: [agroecology@uvm.edu](mailto:agroecology@uvm.edu)