

# Institute for Agroecology (IFA)

## Proposal for the UVM Faculty Senate

November, 2022



The University of Vermont

## THE INSTITUTE FOR AGROECOLOGY

Catalyzing Just  
Transitions in Food  
Systems

COMING  
SOON

Co-Create - Iterate - Integrate - Transform



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## 1. ABSTRACT AND GENERAL INFORMATION

### 1.1 Name and Affiliations

**Name:** Institute for Agroecology (IFA) at the University of Vermont

**Affiliations:** The Institute for Agroecology (IFA) will be a cross-university unit, based within the Office of the Vice President for Research (OVPR) and the Office of Engagement. It will seek to serve the entire UVM community, including faculty, staff, students and administrators, as well as engage the wider public. Because of historical and continuing relationships with the Department of Plant & Soil Sciences and Extension there are strong ties to the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences, but the Institute is designed to interact with the broader UVM community.

**Leadership:** The IFA's leadership team includes the following (see section 4 for extended biographies):

- **Faculty Director:** the founding IFA faculty director will be V. Ernesto Méndez, Professor of Agroecology in the Department of Plant and Soil Science, who has been Co-Director of the UVM [Agroecology and Livelihoods Collaborative \(ALC\)](#) for the last 10 years.
- **Associate Director for Community and Learning:** The founding Associate Director for Community and Learning will be Martha Caswell, ALC Co-Director.
- **Associate Director for Research:** The founding Associate Director for Research will be Colin Anderson, an Associate Research Professor with the Department of Plant and Soil Science. Colin was previously at the Centre for Agroecology, Water and Resilience (CAWR), at Coventry University in the United Kingdom.
- **Program Coordinators:** To manage various existing and emerging programs that will support research, education and outreach, globally and locally, we are in the process of integrating at least 5 program coordinators into the team.

**Reporting:** The IFA director reports directly to the Vice President for Research.

### 1.2 Abstract

The Institute for Agroecology is an ambitious response to the growing calls to transform the world's food systems in the pursuit of equity, sustainability and wellbeing. Building on the foundation of the UVM Agroecology and Livelihoods Collaborative (ALC), a community of practice that has been recognized internationally for its work on agroecology and Participatory Action Research (PAR), the Institute will connect faculty, students, staff and administrators from across campus. It will allow UVM to crystalize its research, learning and extension on agroecology, equity in food systems and food systems transformations. The Institute will emphasize campus-community partnerships, lead signature programs and provide resources and support for aligned projects. All of this will add capacity to existing initiatives and facilitate processes that will contribute toward, leverage and expand UVM's land-grant mission. Through the strengthening of its wide-ranging global networks and programs, the Institute will also boost UVM's international reputation for cutting-edge, transdisciplinary and participatory research.

## **2. INTRODUCTION/RATIONALE/GOALS (1 PAGE)**

### **2.1 Introduction**

This proposal stems from receiving the inaugural Office of the Vice President for Research (OVPR) Faculty Fellowship, which supported a creative idea that could be transformed into a new, university-wide institute. The ALC team obtained this award based on its recognized trajectory in the field of agroecology, and its existing collaborations within and outside of UVM (see Appendix 1 for more detail). Over the last two years, the ALC team engaged in an intensive effort to: 1) socialize the idea of the IFA within the UVM community; 2) learn from other similar initiatives in the U.S. and internationally; and 3) gauge interest from food systems-oriented foundations to support the Institute. By mid-2022, the team had conducted 35 meetings at UVM, including faculty, students, staff and administrators (deans, center/institute directors, and a vice-provost); 9 meetings with similar centers/institutes; and over 15 meetings with philanthropic foundations. In addition, we engaged in numerous meetings with the OVPR and the Provost, which convinced them to commit 3 years of funding to support this initiative. This resulted, in turn, in obtaining matching support from the UVM President. In 2022, we obtained the first grant to directly support the Institute, from the 11<sup>th</sup> Hour/Schmidt Foundation (for \$1 million), which adds to an existing \$1 million in other grants and gifts that we had already secured for the ALC. At this point, we have gathered strong momentum, including securing funds, establishing a talented leadership team, and engaging in several signature programs both nationally and internationally.

### **2.2 Mission and Vision**

**Mission:** Using participatory, holistic and equity-focused approaches to learning, research and engagement, the Institute for Agroecology will co-create and mobilize knowledge to support just transformations in food systems.

**Vision:** We envision thriving food systems that confront inequities, foster human and ecological wellbeing and support dignified and meaningful livelihoods.

### **2.3 Three Guiding Pillars**

The Institute's specific focus on agroecology will set it apart from existing institutes across the country that focus on sustainable agriculture. Three pillars will guide our actions, representing both our focus and approach:

1. **Transforming Food Systems for Just Sustainability:** While many approaches aim to reform or tweak existing food systems, we focus on processes of deep social and structural transformation in pursuit of an ecologically sound and socially just food system.
2. **Participatory, Transdisciplinary and Action Research:** The institute will focus on Participatory Action Research (PAR) approaches, which place the needs and agency of community partners (e.g., farmers) at the heart of the research process. We will build on the ALC's trajectory using these approaches to deepen and expand through the IFA.
3. **Centering Equity:** Today's food systems are fraught with inequity and deep exploitation of land and labor; gender and racial inequality; and extractive dynamics between the global north and south. We recognize that if we are not actively centering our work around this awareness, we will be complicit in reinforcing these patterns of oppression.

### 3. ALIGNMENT WITH UNIVERSITY GOALS (2 PAGES)

#### 3.1 Contributions to the University's Mission

As articulated in our **Strategic Action Areas** below, the IFA will be a hub for critical engagement, innovative research, experiential learning and a dynamic community of cross-cultural exchange. This fully aligns with UVM's land-grant mission and academic success goals, and expands them to reach a global audience.



**Dig Deep [Research]:** Lead and facilitate bold transdisciplinary and participatory action research focusing on the deep complexity of food and agricultural systems.

**Cross-Pollinate [Outreach]:** Engage and foster connections among diverse voices, perspectives, and epistemologies, across local, national, and global networks.

**Amplify [Communication]:** Create platforms for communication and storytelling that amplify agroecology narratives for just and sustainable food systems.

**Cultivate [Learning]:** Prepare the next generation of transformative agroecological leaders through undergraduate, graduate, community and professional co-learning.

**Activate:** Engage in local economic, social and cultural development processes in Vermont, and beyond, to directly foster agroecology in place.

#### 3.2 Local to Global Engagement

The IFA will be simultaneously grounded in local action, while engaged in national and international networks of partners and collaborators. To this end, we have structured our two flagship, and mutually reinforcing programs, which will involve several signature initiatives (see Figure below), focusing on: 1) Activating Agroecology in Vermont and 2) The International Agroecology Program.



#### 3.3 Centering Equity and Common Ground

Following one of our guiding pillars (see Section 2)- **Centering Equity**- we will incorporate this lens, including inequities of race, gender, class, geography etc., as well as their intersectionality, into all of our research, learning and outreach activities. We will also intentionally integrate an equity centered perspective into the recruitment of staff and students, as well as to the management of the institute. This aligns with our fostering and integration of the Common Ground qualities of respect, integrity, innovation, openness, justice, and responsibility.

#### 3.4 Achieving the Institute for Agroecology's Goals

The Institute will be a dynamic hub for UVM faculty, staff, students and external actors — ranging from farmers to policy makers — to work on the most pressing challenges facing food systems

and to pursue innovative solutions. To do this, we will adhere to the following principles to help us support, leverage and deepen the work on food system transformation at UVM:

1. The Institute will intentionally integrate learning/teaching, research and engagement, in order to complement, and not compete, with other academic and research units at UVM.
2. The Institute will help to crystallize and embolden the existing expertise and interests of students, staff, and faculty from across UVM, which match the Institute's mission. Individuals and teams sharing this vision will be supported in their research, teaching, and engagement.
3. The Institute will include and lead a unique focus on several *signature projects and programs*, which will provide opportunities for others at UVM to actively participate.
4. Through close collaborations with other units at UVM (i.e. Gund, Office of Engagement, Extension, academic units, etc.), the Institute will contribute its PAR expertise to reach out and meaningfully engage with external actors, regionally, nationally and globally.

### **3.5 Leadership and Resources**

The Institute will follow a shared leadership model among the Institute directors (see section 1), and a core team of program coordinators (including new hires and UVM staff and faculty already affiliated with the ALC). To maintain accountability to our various constituencies, we will also establish two advisory groups – an internal committee made up of representatives from UVM, and an Institute Council that includes external partners and strategic allies. In line with our principles of participatory governance, we will continuously seek participation and guidance from students, faculty, administrators and our external partners. The IFA leadership team has been engaging with faculty, staff and students across UVM to develop partnerships in order to secure the necessary human and other resources for its success. We are currently exploring space options with the OVPR. We have secured three years of internal support from UVM's OVPR, Provost and President's offices, in addition to over \$2 million in grants and gifts.

### **3.6 Contributions to Vermont and Society at Large**

Vermont is a state whose reliance on agriculture and a working rural landscape is critical for both economic viability and cultural identity. Agroecology is a field that is dedicated to the revitalization and regeneration of agroecosystems that support thriving relationships among people and places. As we confront issues of food security, dignified and sustainable livelihoods, and more equitable futures, agroecology offers tools that can contribute positively both at a local and global level.

Establishing an internationally recognized and networked Institute for Agroecology at UVM will bring positive attention to the unique strengths of our local context, while also offering opportunities for cross-pollination and an exchange of ideas. This will allow for sharing with others who are facing similar issues across the region, the nation and the world. Linking the work of the Institute to existing statewide resources (Farm to Plate, Agency of Agriculture, Vermont Law School, etc.) while providing interaction with international networks will further reinforce UVM's state-wide, land grant mission.

## 4. RESOURCES, BUDGET AND STAFFING

### 4.1 Faculty and Staff

#### 4.1.1 *Faculty biographies*

**V. Ernesto Méndez**, Ph.D., is Professor of Agroecology at the University of Vermont's (UVM) Department of Plant and Soil Science and Environmental Program, where he co-directs the Agroecology and Livelihoods Collaborative (ALC). His research and teaching focus on agroecology, smallholder coffee systems, participatory action research (PAR), and transdisciplinary research approaches. He has over 25 years of experience working with smallholder and Indigenous farmers in Latin America and collaborating in agroecology efforts across the world. At UVM he is also active in advancing issues of diversity, anti-racism, equity and belonging, and will be the inaugural faculty director of the new Institute for Agroecology at UVM, which is expected to launch in spring of 2023. Ernesto was born and raised in El Salvador and maintains deep connections with his Central American roots.

**Colin Anderson**, Ph.D., is Associate Research Professor of Agroecology at the University of Vermont's (UVM) Department of Plant and Soil Science. His 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 the 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. This is anchored by a commitment to knowledge mobilization, which involves a political and social process of co-producing and deploying knowledge in processes of social transformation. He is a co-convenor of the international platform, Agroecology Now, and maintains an active presence in international networks of researchers, movements and institutions working to advance agroecology. He is the founding Associate Director for Research of the new Institute for Agroecology at UVM.

**Victor (Vic) Izzo**, Ph.D., is Senior Lecturer in Agroecology at the University of Vermont's (UVM) Department of Plant and Soil Science and Environmental Program. He has extensive teaching, curricular development and education administration experience within UVM. Formally trained as an evolutionary ecologist and agricultural entomologist, Vic's research interests are diverse, but he has been recently focused on applying PAR approaches to ecological pest management and agroecology in Vermont and the U.S. Northeast. Vic has served as the Education Coordinator for the ALC, for the last 6 years, and will coordinate the IFA's High Impact Educational Programs (HILP) for undergraduate students.

#### 4.1.2 *Staff Positions and Biographies*

**Martha Caswell**, M.P.P, is currently Co-Director of the Agroecology and Livelihoods Collaborative (ALC) and part-time Lecturer in the UVM Department of Plant and Soil Science. She will be the IFA's founding Associate Director for Community and Learning, and is based

within the OVPR. Martha brings rich experience in community development, organizing work outside of academia and in facilitating community-university partnerships in the USA and internationally. Over the last decade, her work has focused on integrating agroecology, participatory action research and social justice into a diversity of food systems transformation processes. The Associate Director for Community and Learning will lead the Institute's strategic process of building internal and external relationships, with a focus on facilitating our local and global community of practice. Focused on ensuring the impact of our work through societal engagement, she will work collaboratively with farmers, civil society organizations, small and medium-sized enterprises, research institutions, and other partners. Martha is currently a Ph.D candidate in the UVM Rubenstein School of Environment and Natural Resources.

**Scott Lewins, M.S.** is currently an Entomology and Extension Educator in UVM Extension and part-time Lecturer in the Plant and Soil Science Department. Scott works with a multitude of growers within the region in various agricultural systems, with a focus on sustainable pest management, particularly, the development of appropriate IPM tactics for Northeastern organic growers. Scott has been instrumental to the formation of AgroTek Innovation and the Agroecology Extension Summer Research Fellowship, both experiential learning opportunities representing alignment across UVM's land-grant mission of research, education, and extension. Scott provides leadership as Lead of UVM Extension's Sustainable Agriculture, Food and Forests Result Area, identifying collaborative opportunities across the Result Area, connecting colleagues with resources within and outside of Extension, and recognizing gaps and needs for additional programming and funding. He is a member of UVM Extension's Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Committee and UVM Extension representative on the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Committee. Scott has served as the Extension Coordinator for the ALC, for the last 4 years, and will coordinate Extension and Experiential Learning programs within the IFA.

#### *4.1.3 New Positions*

The new Institute for Agroecology will be establishing three new positions within the OVPR as follows:

1. **Associate Director for Community and Learning-** This is a new position within the OVPR, which has been filled by Martha Caswell, previously Co-Director of the Agroecology and Livelihoods Collaborative in the Plant and Soil Science Department. It was described in section 1. This position is funded through a combination of base funds, teaching, and external grants. The Associate Director for Community Engagement focuses on three areas that are critical to the Institute: creating opportunities for university-community collaborations that undergird the Institute's goals related to research, education, and outreach; strategic planning for the Institute and leadership team; and cultivating a robust internal community of UVM faculty, staff, and students.

2. **Operations Manager**- Also housed in the OVPR, this position will be funded through a combination of UVM base funds and external sources. The Operations Manager (OM) will lead all office and operational aspects related to the Institute for Agroecology's (IFA) academic programs, research, campus-wide and externally facing events and seminars. The IFA is a highly collaborative and complex cross-university institute and the OM will provide direct support to the IFA leadership team, as well as faculty, staff and students affiliated with the institute. Specific responsibilities include overseeing the IFA space both related to daily use and special events, updating institute databases and website content, coordinating annual and long-term budgeting, forecasting and analysis to ensure optimal use of resources with an eye toward long-term sustainability.  
Recruitment for this position is in progress.
3. **Learning Programs Coordinator**- Also housed in the OVPR, this position will be funded through a combination of UVM base funds and external sources. The Learning Programs Coordinator (LPC) will be the primary manager of learning programs for the Institute for Agroecology (IFA), which include the Certificate of Graduate Study in Agroecology, the Undergraduate Research Fellowship (during the academic year), the Agroecology Extension Summer Research Fellowship (AX), and an emerging Global Leadership programming. The LPC will develop and manage program systems including recruitment, enrollment, and retention. This will include designing materials (website postings, flyers, etc.), social media postings (Instagram, Facebook, Twitter, etc.), writing curricular descriptions (for print and online), etc. Recruitment for this position is in progress.
4. **Global Programs Coordinator**- Also housed in the OVPR, this position will be funded through a combination of UVM base funds and external sources. The Global Programs Coordinator (GPC) will manage day to day functions related to the global programs within the Institute for Agroecology (IFA), working in close collaboration with the Faculty Director, Associate Director for Community & Learning, and the Associate Director for Research. Responsibilities include managing an array of complex, multi-site programs focusing on agroecology and involving research, education and outreach. The GPC will develop and maintain communication systems, create materials, provide administrative and logistical oversight, and effectively communicate with relevant actors both within and outside of UVM. Recruitment for this position is in progress.

#### **4.2 Library support**

We do not envision requiring additional library support beyond what is already available.

#### **4.3 Equipment needs and funds required to meet them.**

We do not foresee the need for new equipment at this time. Specific equipment needs will be covered by extramural grants as needed.

#### **4.4 Physical space needs and plans to meet them:**

The IFA will require a committed, centralized working space for the leadership team, affiliated faculty, students, and visitors, which would include offices, and an area to hold seminars, have working meetings and congregate. The space would be a buzzing hub of activity and a combination of hot desking space for students, visiting scholars and community partners and permanent desk space for Institute staff. It would eventually host our creative communications lab and the audio-visual infrastructure to support this vital aspect of our work (video/audio cameras, editing equipment, etc.). Dedicated physical space is considered as a priority by most external actors we interviewed, as well as by the Gund Institute and others across UVM. Institute space could be obtained through sharing or re-assigning of existing space within campus.

At this time, we are exploring space options with the OVPR. Office space for the three directors is secured through their affiliation with CALS, but additional space will be required for new hires in 2023.

#### **4.5 Budget**

Our projected three-year budget, which ranges between \$1.1 and \$1.3 million per year has been secured, pending some pledges from the McKnight foundation and an anonymous donor. Fundraising to achieve a sustainable and diversified portfolio is our top priority, and capacity to do this will be greatly increased once the Institute is official, and we have been able to secure core staff positions. Table 1 presents a 3-year budget following the proposal guidelines provided by the Faculty Senate. We have sought to diversify the funding sources for most of the leadership (Faculty Director and Associate Directors) and core institute positions (Program, Learning and Global coordinators), through a combination of core UVM funding, UVM teaching, and external sources.

**Table 1.** Projected three year budget for the Institute for Agroecology at UVM (2023-2025).

				Annual Cost				
Category	Item	Detail		FY 2023	FY 2024 <sup>1</sup>	FY 2025 <sup>1</sup>	Source of funds	Committed (Y/N)
<b>Personnel</b>	Faculty Director	50% effort; 9 months		\$76,869.23	\$78,406.62	\$79,974.75	OVPR/President/Provost	Yes
	Associate Director for Community & Learning	50% effort; 12 months		\$64,312.50	\$65,598.75	\$66,910.73	OVPR/President/Provost	Yes
	Associate Director for Research	30% effort; 12 months		\$44,982.00	\$45,881.64	\$46,799.27	OVPR/President/Provost	Yes
	Operations Manager	100% effort; 12-month; Expected salary for pending hire		\$88,200.00	\$89,964.00	\$91,763.28	OVPR/President/Provost; Gifts and grants	Yes
	Learning Proframs Coordinator	100% effort; 12-month; Expected salary for pending hire		\$73,500.00	\$74,970.00	\$76,469.40	OVPR/President/Provost; Anonymous donor; Schmidt; McKnight	Yes
	Global Programs Coordinator	100% effort; 12-month; Expected salary for pending hire		\$73,500.00	\$74,970.00	\$76,469.40	OVPR/President/Provost; McKnight; Schmidt	Yes
	Undergraduate High Impact Learning Programs Coordinator	25% effort in summer; 9 months		\$32,836.00	\$33,492.72	\$34,162.57	Gifts and grants	Yes
	Extension and Experiential Programs Coordinator	25% effort; 12 months		\$25,725.00	\$26,239.50	\$26,764.29	OVPR/President/Provost	Yes
<b>Programming</b>	Agroecology Support to the CCRP	Supports agroecological research in South America and Africa; Includes personnel, Graduate students, travel and other costs (total=\$230K)		\$205,000.00	\$267,000.00	\$267,000.00	McKnight Foundation	Yes; Expected renewal of \$800K for 2024-2026
	Agroecology Knowledge Networks for Global Transformation	Supports network building Internationally; Includes personnel, Graduate students, travel and other network expenses (total=\$1 million)		\$215,870.00	\$271,183.00	\$212,609.00	11th Hour/Schmidt Foundation	Yes
	Activating Agroecology in Vermont	Deepening and expanding agroecology work with VT farmers and organizations; Includes personnel and field research costs		\$60,000.00	\$60,000.00	\$60,000.00	• Anonymous donor	Yes; Additional support for 2023 and 2024 pending
	Roadmap for Agroecology in the USDA and the US	Starting with a conference in 2023, map the road to advance and fund agroecology in USDA and the U.S.; Includes conference, personnel, travel and networking costs		\$100,000.00	\$40,000.00	\$100,000.00	• USDA • McKnight Foundation • Kellogg Foundation	Yes; Additional funds for 2023 2024 pending
	Agroecology Research and Extension Experience for Undergraduates	Experiential program for undergraduate students to learn about agroecology and extension		\$70,666.67	\$70,666.67	\$70,666.67	• USDA	Yes
<b>Equipment</b>	Printer/Copier and supplies	Donated by Plant and Soil Science Dept and OVPR		\$500.00	\$500.00	\$500.00	UVM PSS	Yes
	Creative communications			\$10,000.00	\$2,500.00	\$2,500.00	11th Hour/Schmidt Foundation	Yes
<b>Contractual</b>	Business Services	Donated by OVPR		\$7,000.00	\$7,000.00	\$7,000.00	UVM OVPR	Yes
	Consultants	Support for leadership team and various programs		\$20,000.00	\$20,000.00	\$25,000.00	• Anonymous donor • McKnight Foundation • Kellogg Foundation	Yes
	<b>TOTAL</b>			<b>\$1,168,961.40</b>	<b>\$1,228,372.89</b>	<b>\$1,244,589.36</b>		

## 5. GOALS TO BE REVIEWED AFTER THREE AND FIVE YEARS

Tracking our success requires an approach that not only includes traditional metrics of academic achievement (i.e., publications, grants, etc.) but also measures our direct impact and accountability to our partners, stakeholders, and society at large. This includes explicit evidence that our work has impact on the ground (i.e. the testimony of farmers or policymakers on how our research helped them resolve a problem). In order to do this, we need to incorporate a mixed-methods and participatory approach to assess our success and impact. For this we drew from various evaluation approaches, including those used in international development, and which combine quantitative and qualitative methods to document and assess impact. For example, the qualitative Most Significant Change (MSC) method (Davies and Dart, 2005)<sup>1</sup> and network analyses. In Table 2 we present some of the key approaches to assess our impact, accountability and success across our research, education, and outreach activities.

**Table 2.** Impact Measures for the UVM Institute for Agroecology

Impacts Measures for Strategic Action Areas
<b>1. Digging Deep (Research):</b> Number and quality of publications; number of special issues; reports; citations of research; participation of institute staff in academic conferences; membership on editorial boards; number of affiliate faculty.
<b>2. Cross-pollinating:</b> Number and qualitative evaluation of institute events; Number of networks we participate in; ‘influencers’ that join our network; international projects and partners.
<b>3. Amplifying:</b> Number (and views/hits of) videos, op eds, creative outputs; the use of these outputs in policy and civil society spaces.
<b>4. Cultivating (learning and leadership):</b> Number of undergraduate, masters, PhD students; number of fellows in leadership programs; qualitative assessment of learning experience; number of leadership programs established; total number of people trained/supported; number of underrepresented people trained/supported; testimonies from people trained.
<b>5. Activating local development:</b> Impact of research on community partners (captured through testimonies, and direct benefits to them);
Cross-Cutting Measures
<b>UVM integration:</b> Number of affiliated faculty, graduate students, staff and other collaborators from different units.
<b>Funding:</b> Number of funded signature projects/programs; number of institute-supported proposals; total external funding acquired; teaching income; consultancy income; number of proposals submitted, especially involving transdisciplinary teams.
<b>Equity:</b> Number of scholarships provided to underrepresented students; equity evaluation of institute leadership approach; extent to which institute activities (research, learning, action) address equity and an assessment of the efficacy of these equity measures.
<b>Policy:</b> Number of policy briefs; citation of research in policy development; testimonials of impact of five strategic areas on policy.
<b>Internationalization:</b> Number of international co-authors; Number of international partners on funding applications; Number of international projects; International student enrollment in courses

<sup>1</sup> Davies, R. and J. Dart (2005) *The 'Most Significant Change' (MSC) Technique: a guide to its use*. Report.

In addition to tracking our impact and progress through the metrics and methods presented above, we will call on the advisory boards described in the leadership section to support us in staying accountable. For these to be effective we need to include diverse representation from each of the sectors of society that we hope to impact, including researchers, farmers, students, social movements, food consumers, representatives from local and national institutions and organizations, etc. There are some positive examples of how advisory boards can be important avenues for effective governance and enhanced impact, such as the model from the University of Wisconsin's Center for Integrated Agricultural Systems (CIAS) and the Institute for Sustainable Solutions at Portland State University, two of the external institutes we interviewed during the development of this proposal.

## 6. APPENDICES

### 6.1 Appendix 1: Institute for Agroecology Signature Programs

The cover of the report features a yellow triangle in the top left corner with the University of Vermont logo and the text "The University of Vermont". The title "Institute For Agroecology" is in the top center, and "Signature Program 1 of 2" is in the top right. The main title "Activating Agroecology In Vermont" is prominently displayed in large black letters across the center. Below the title, there are three sections: "The Need", "The Answer", and an illustration.

**The Need**

With substantial issues related to water quality, biodiversity loss, climate change, lack of democratic participation and inequity in the food system, agroecology has much to offer Vermonters, yet is only beginning to become developed in the USA, and in Vermont.

The University of Vermont has always played an important role, as a land grant university, in servicing the agricultural sector through extension, learning and research, and the renewed UVM strategic plan doubles down on this vital role.

The state of Vermont is an ideal US-based location to focus on agroecology, where much of the state is made up of small and medium sized farms and where the decline of the dairy industry leaves family farmers and rural development planners seeking solutions. It is also a small state and ideally suited to the territorial approach that has been identified as a critical scale for enabling agroecology transitions.

**The Answer**

The launch of the Institute marks a unique opportunity for UVM to innovate, becoming a beacon and lighthouse for agroecological transition in the state, the region and the country. To this end, the Institute's *Activating Agroecology in Vermont* program, will leverage the existing strong infrastructure, programs and capacity at UVM, into a consolidated strategy to become a world leader in university enabled agroecological activation.

A detailed black and white illustration of a rural landscape. It shows a large barn with a silo, a tractor in a field, a milk truck labeled "MILK", a long building with several trucks parked in front, and a road with cars. There are trees, rolling hills, and a cloudy sky in the background.

**PROPOSED COMPONENTS***Local Action, Rooted in an International Network*

The program will focus on consolidating local programs, rural development, network-building, participatory learning and action research within the framework of agroecology transitions. It will work with UVM Extension to align activities with the agroecology approach. Recognizing the importance of direct connection to the land, both the UVM Horticultural Research & Education Center, the Intervale Center and our local farmer-partners will provide living laboratories of learning and experimentation, which will be linked to local 'lighthouse' agroecological farms to extend the learning dynamic.

In parallel, we will lead the construction of an international network of university-based hubs of agroecological activation in the USA, Canada, Europe, Latin America and Africa. Focusing on the USA, we will participate in INFAS to connect with other universities to facilitate the adoption of agroecology in other institutions and regions. This will enable the cross-pollination of innovations and increase the visibility and viability of agroecology in Vermont.

**Vermont Participatory Action Research for Transitions  
(VPART)**


Dig Deep

The VPART program will combine and expand two existing ALC programs: the Vermont Entomology and Participatory Action Research Team (VEPART, which focuses on agricultural entomology and sustainable pest management; and the ALC's Urban and Peri-Urban Agroecology (UPAE) initiative, which has carried out transdisciplinary agroecological analysis on the opportunities, challenges and resilience of urban and peri-urban agroecology for farmers, the organizations that support them and the cities where they are located. Because of both geographic and thematic overlaps, the existing programs (VEPART and UPAE) will be integrated under the new VPART program with a more expansive and systematized participatory action research focus to foster agroecology transitions. VPART researchers will work with farmers and other regional food system actors to identify opportunities for agroecological transitions and will design participatory research processes led by farmers and other actors, in response to the questions that arise related to agroecological transitions. We will build upon the already strong network of farm partners that we currently engage through UPAE and VEPART to connect with additional network partners over time.



### Agroecology Undergraduate Fellowship Program



These high-impact learning opportunities are tailored for undergraduate students looking to deepen their knowledge of agroecological approaches and developing transdisciplinary research and outreach skills. The goals of the Fellowship programs are to:

- support students in cultivating sustainable leadership strategies
- provide students with a transdisciplinary experiential learning experience focused on the development of adaptable research, education, and outreach skills
- help prepare students for careers and graduate education in agroecology and extension
- support and contribute to new and ongoing research projects dedicated to UVM's Land Grant mission.

### Action Research Partnerships for Equity and Transformation in Food Systems



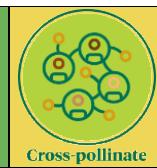
Small research funding grants will be made available for faculty at UVM, and in the Institute, to carry out community-engaged action research partnerships. The projects will have several criteria to align the research with the Institute's mission. First, projects must include a minimum of 1 academic partner (an Institute affiliate) and 1 partner from civil society groups, NGOs, and/or social movements. Second, the projects must include a focus on equity and on social transformation. Research will thus focus on issues related to labor, BIPOC-led community building, historic injustices, feminist approaches to food systems, reparations, indigenous food sovereignty, queer agroecology, decolonization and other related topics. We will strive for a combination of local and internationally focused research projects.

### Capacity Building for Transmedia Story Telling and Knowledge Mobilization



The Agroecology Institute will establish a comprehensive program to support affiliated researchers to communicate the outcomes of research to affected audiences using podcasts, videos, animations, policy-briefs, blogs, etc., thereby building capacity to effectively mobilize knowledge for agroecology transformation.

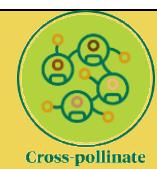
## Connecting Agroecology in Vermont to the World



Cross-pollinate

This component of Activate Agroecology Vermont is deeply tied to the second signature program – the Global Knowledge Alliance which represents a global network of innovation and ideas through which to connect Vermont actors. Within this context, the agroecology institute will be a hub of activity, communications, connection and mobility. It will both provide resources to send students, farmers, organizers, faculty and others working on agroecology in Vermont out to learn from, and share learnings from Vermont. As importantly, it will be a place that will host world leading agroecology scientists, artists, practitioners to bring new ideas and inspiration to Vermont.

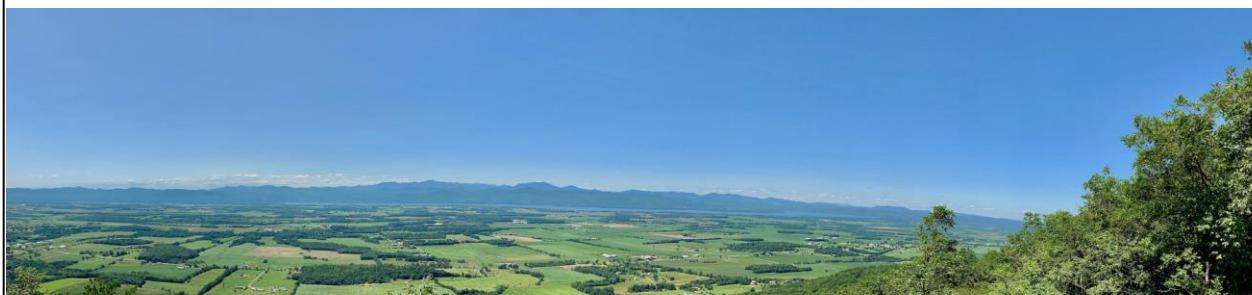
## Crystallizing Agroecology in the USA



Cross-pollinate

A growing number of academics, institutions, policymakers and civil society groups are working to articulate agroecology in the American context. We will convene a five-year program that, in partnership with the leading academic institutions in the USA working on sustainable agriculture and agroecology, a multi-actor process that helps to solidify the practice, science and policy of agroecology in the USA. Working with the Inter-institutional Network for Food, Agriculture and Sustainability (INFAS) and institutions such as the Agriculture Sustainability Initiative at Berkley, the Center for Agroforestry at the University of Missouri, and over 100 leading US-based scientists connected to the Agroecology Research-Action Collaborative, we will approach foundations to support a five-year program of work. This will include yearly convening and a pot of competitive seed funding to address an annual topic. Preliminary topics include:

1. Agroecology and Extension: What is an agroecological approach to Extension.
2. Agroecology and policy in the USA
3. Agroecology and equity in the USA



# Global Agroecology Knowledge Alliance

## The Need

In the last decade, agroecology – led by social movements and allied institutions - has taken hold around the world. Mainstream donors and institutions are looking hard at shifting resources into agroecology, but it is highly contested, and competing proposals that largely retain the status quo and the unsustainable development path of the day hold great sway.

In the international arena, mainstream unsustainable models of agriculture and food systems are propped up by substantial research networks and institutions with deep pockets.

While the research networks and institutional infrastructure for agroecology is growing, there is a great need to consolidate an International Alliance and to advance transformative agroecology in different contexts and to amplify it in the international arena.

## The Answer

The *Global Agroecology Knowledge Alliance* will be an international initiative to consolidate, disseminate and mobilize knowledge to advance agroecology, its evidence base and the capacity of agroecology leaders-champions. It will train the next generation of knowledge professionals to meet the complex and demanding needs of a participatory and transdisciplinary approach to knowledge co-production and mobilization

It will be a global beacon of hope and center of excellence for agroecology and food systems transformation.



## **PROPOSED COMPONENTS**

*A Global Alliance, Anchored by the UVM Institute for Agroecology*

The Alliance will be anchored by the Institute for Agroecology at the University of Vermont. It will be powered by an alliance of global who are working to develop and mobilize knowledge for food system transformation. It will engage a wide range of knowledge leaders in the global north and south to advance agroecological research and transformation. The Alliance will involve several interrelated initiatives, each responding to a demonstrated need in the international agroecology community.

### **Global Agroecology Leaders Fellowship Program**



There are growing calls to cultivate a transformative approach to leadership for agroecology, yet a global program on agroecological leadership is still a glaring gap. This program will bring together yearly cohorts of agroecology leaders in a transdisciplinary and engaged program of leadership development that itself embodies the key principles of agroecology. The cohort will be embedded in a robust international network of co-learning to foster the competencies and skills (in participatory research, creative communications, facilitation, etc.) that will allow actors, positioned in and outside of the academy, to develop as highly effective agents of agroecology transformation in a variety of settings around the world.

### **Annual Global Agroecology Transitions Summit**



Each year, the alliance will host an international summit of 50 leading actors and thinkers working on agroecology transitions to facilitate the cross-pollination. Hosted in its first year in UVM, each year the location of the summit will rotate between regions of the world.



### Support Team for Agroecology Transitions



This program represents a form of agroecological ‘extension’ based on a participatory and transdisciplinary approach. It supports organizations, networks, programs, donors and policy-makers who are endeavoring to enable agroecology transitions in and across territories but require increased capacity, competency and guidance. A core Agroecology Support Team (AES) will provide tailored support in the form of advice, accompaniment, training, co-learning, systemization and research design-delivery. The focus is on enhancing endogenous capacity in organizations and territories – meeting people wherever they are at in the process of engaging with agroecology transitions – and will draw from our wide network of affiliate agroecologists across the world to provide mentoring and coaching and especially nurturing peer-to-peer and south-to-south support. For example, we currently provide support to the McKnight funded Collaborative Crop Research Program working across 12 countries.

### Amplifying Agroecology Through Transmedia Story Telling and Knowledge Mobilization



**The Agroecology Compass:** The Agroecology Compass will be a high profile, curated global online knowledge hub for web-based resources, case studies, videos, research, evidence and other materials that support and inspire agroecology transitions. It will create a highly navigable platform for the best resources, evidence, videos, etc. to provide a one-stop spot for the many emerging resources and collections of online resources related to agroecology.

**Multimedia Quarterly Magazine:** Building on the model of the now defunct, yet highly esteemed, Farming Matters magazine, the Alliance will co-produce a new quarterly magazine, published in multiple languages with partners in different regions of the world to advance agroecology transitions through commentaries, case studies, opinion pieces, profiles, etc. The audience is practitioners of agroecology transitions, and the magazine will provide highly accessible material drawing from different knowledge systems and ways of knowing.

### Digging Deep to Unearth Transformation (Research)



The Alliance will provide resources and a support network for bold transdisciplinary action research that interrogates food systems and ways to improve them. It will foster international research collaborations and joint publications amongst members, and generate new opportunities for funding. As a part of the **transformative agroecology research program**, we will recruit between 5-10 fully-funded PhD and several postdoctoral students to carryout cutting edge research for agroecology transitions. These students will be based in different affiliated institutions of the alliance and will benefit from the networked nature of the alliance. The program will recruit and support promising international students from the global south and underrepresented U.S. students.