

51th Session of the Committee on World Food Security (CFS 51)



Side Event *Boosting finance in Agroecology to achieve Rio Conventions' Targets*

Wednesday 25 October 2023 , 08:30 - 09:45 AM CET

Summary

The event discussed how boosting finance in agroecology would greatly accelerate the food system transformations necessary to achieve Rio Conventions' targets on climate, biodiversity and desertification simultaneously with achieving food security.

Lauren Baker, Global Alliance for the Future of Food, stressed the urgent need for increased investments in agroecology to transform food systems. She highlighted the current agricultural system's external costs of \$12 to \$19 trillion and the transition costs of \$250 billion to \$450 billion annually. Lauren called for redirecting global subsidies of \$630 billion toward agroecology. Current investments in agroecology, totaling about \$40 billion, fall significantly short, revealing a tenfold underinvestment. She emphasized the potential for varied funding strategies to align and coordinate, boosting investments in agroecology and accelerating food systems transformation.

Tyler Short, from La Via Campesina and Civil Society and Indigenous Peoples' Mechanism - CSIPM, underscored the importance of financing agroecology. He urged the recognition of small-scale food producers as political subjects and advocated for prioritizing grassroots social movements in policymaking. Tyler viewed agroecology not only as a science and set of sustainable practices but as a form of resistance against profit-centric economic systems. Peasants, indigenous peoples, women, and youth played central roles in agroecological transitions, challenging societal power structures. Tyler emphasized biodiversity and sustainable practices, opposing false solutions like nature-based approaches. He called for genuine agrarian reforms and equitable measures to achieve gender equality, addressing rural-to-urban migration. Tyler concluded with a call to globalize the struggle for food sovereignty, underlying agroecology's transformative potential.

Madeleine Kaufmann, from the Swiss Federal Office for Agriculture, emphasized involving more farmers, especially young farmers, at the policy level. She positioned agroecology as crucial in Switzerland to enhance food system resilience and drive necessary transformations. Kaufmann highlighted Switzerland's commitment to incorporating agroecological principles into its national agriculture policy and collaborations in Africa and Asia. She echoed Lauren's point to institutionally address interlinkages among subsystems of food to tackle global challenges.

Victor Suarez, Secretary of Agriculture for Food Self-Sufficiency of Mexico, emphasized agroecological transformation as a top public policy priority. This signifies a shift away from public investing in an outdated model of industrial agriculture. Victor outlined significant public programs providing economic support and technical alignment for smallholder farmers, integrating indigenous and scientific knowledge. Another key initiative supports over 500 thousand smallholder farmers in landscape regeneration, covering reforestation and agroforestry on more than 1 million hectares, with investments totaling USD 2.1 billion. Victor highlighted additional efforts such as a direct purchasing program for staples at guaranteed minimum prices, ongoing scientific support, and a move towards reducing glyphosate use. He concluded that the historical impact of the Green Revolution model was due to decades of public investment. There is an urgent need for coordinated, coherent, and impactful strategies for agroecological advocacy and transition in similar public involvement - this paradigm shift requires time and persistent support.

Jasmin Hundorf, from the German Development Cooperation - GIZ, summarized key insights from a recent donor meeting on agroecology. Attended by around 70 representatives, including leading countries and various donor institutions, the meeting highlighted growing interest and commitment to agroecology. Hundorf emphasized the substantial financing gap for a sustainable transition in agri-food systems. Challenges discussed included the multi-sectoral nature of agroecology and the need for long-term investments amid short project cycles. Successful examples, collaboration between public and private sectors, and the importance of coordinated efforts among various funders were emphasized. The conclusion underscored the significance of not just increasing funds but also investing existing resources more effectively. Jasmin identified the CFS as a crucial forum for coordinating and strengthening collaboration among farmers, social movements, and the finance and donor community to support agroecology.

Emile Frison, from the Agroecology Coalition, shared insights on the Agroecology Financing Assessment Tool, developed since the 2019 FAO Agroecology Symposium. The tool helps donors, investors, and organizations analyze their portfolios in line with 13 agroecology principles. Emile emphasized the importance of documenting funding evolution and fostering greater investments to drive a real agroecological transformation. The tool aids in project proposal development and aligning initiatives with agroecological principles, contributing to the broader understanding of agroecology funding.

Panelists responded to additional questions from the audience, particularly related to the role of international trade in agroecological food systems and how to convince the mainstream about agroecology. Victor emphasized the importance of knowing farmers, connecting with nature, organizing, protesting, and building strategic alliances. Jasmine shared her experience of comparing agricultural policies with agroecological principles, emphasizing the need for measurable metrics.

The session was concluded by **Daniel Moss**, from the Agroecology Fund, who offered concluding remarks, acknowledging the progress made in the agroecology conversation while recognizing the challenges ahead.