

Comment from Thailand on CFS Agroecological and other innovative approaches.

1. Do you think that the recommendations in the HLPE Report accurately reflect the findings of the Report?

Yes, in general terms, we are satisfied that the recommendations reflect the findings of the Report.

In detail, we would like to make two observations:

- 1) the concept of ‘agency’ as the fifth pillar of FSN should better be highlighted and clearly justified at the outset of the recommendation to better reflect the findings of the HLPE report.

- 2) two distinguished groups of farmers could have been better identified by the report: the group of family farmers/smallholders with limited capacity of farming system, and the group of medium-big farmers with high capacity of farming operations.

Each of these groups has different priorities, basic needs, as well as different viewpoints on applying agro-ecological and innovative approaches to the achievement on food security and nutrition. As such, States and IGOs should recognize the unique characteristics of the targeted group of farmers in order to provide appropriate recommendations that match the priorities and the potential capacities of each group.

2. Do you think that major problems are missing from the HLPE recommendations?

In our view, no major problem is missing.

Nevertheless, we would like to submit the two following considerations:

- 1) the issue of Sustainable Soil and Land Management could have been better echoed in the recommendations since it lies at heart of agro-ecological transitions towards SFS.

The HLPE report addresses the concepts of land-sharing and land-sparing; however, from the holistic viewpoint, the linkage to the existing FAO guidelines and best practices on sustainable soil management is missing and should have been referred to in the recommendations.

- 2) It is important to reiterate the need to establish a mechanism that supports the development of performance metrics and investments in research on ecological footprint assessment.
3. Can you give examples of policies related to agro-ecological systems and other innovation systems for sustainable food systems that ensure food security and nutrition? How were these policies formulated and what was their impact?

Thailand has long been promoting the concepts of “Sufficiency Economy Philosophy or SEP” and “New Theory Agriculture” in the agricultural national strategic plans to achieve sustainable agricultural and food systems.

The ‘SEP’ sets the general principle for economic development stating that economic development must be done stepwise, step by step. It should begin with strengthening our economic foundation, by assuring that the majority of our population has enough to live on and to be self-sufficient. Once reasonable progress has been achieved, people should embark in the next steps of development, by pursuing more advanced levels of economic development.

The ‘New Theory Agriculture’ is the concrete example of application of SEP principle to the agricultural sector in Thailand. The new theory promotes integrated and sustainable agriculture and food systems i.e. diversified food crops, fish farming, and animal husbandry for family’s consumption, while maintaining proper living standard in balance with the environment and in alignment with the agro-ecological approach.

Adopting the ‘SEP’ and the ‘New theory’ together help increase farms resiliency and assure the availability and accessibility of food and nutrition of family farmers, especially the small-scale holders. As a consequence, it paves the way towards the achievement of SDGs.

In an effort to translate theory into action, the government established an agro-ecological network within farming communities since 2016. The application of the ‘New Theory’ achieved in providing socio-economic returns and also environmental benefits to farmers within 1-3 years. The up-scaling of these practices dramatically increased thanks to farmer-to-farmer sharing knowledge platform.

4. Are there any other thoughts that you think should be taken into account by the CFS as part of this policy convergence process?

We think that the CFS should take into account the following two thoughts:

- 1) CFS Recommendation should take into account the different timings of when providing guidance, when assessing, when monitoring and when evaluating the progress of the implementation.

The application of innovation and technology, for example, could be categorized in terms of application cost-benefit, returning period, and impacts.

Although the HLPE report mentions that there is still no definitive set of practices that could be clearly identified as agro-ecological and environmentally friendly, we think that stakeholders should be correctly and clearly informed about the prominent practices, as well as innovation and technology, their cost-benefit, returning period, and potential socio-economic impacts and environmental impact in the short-medium-long term period, in order to allow stakeholders to make informed choices and better decisions in alignment with their national priority and capacity (Rapporteur note 1-a). This comment also echoes the recommendation #3 of the Rapporteur's note on research.

- 2) There might be the need for further discussion about the set of performance indicators needed to assess, monitor and evaluate the transition process towards sustainable agriculture and food system in a comparable and traceable manner.