

PAFO FO-RI WORKSHOP REPORT

“Exploring the Potential of Farmers’ Organizations for Agroecology and Climate Resilience: Opportunities and Challenges”

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AGRICORD





Contents

Background.....	3
Introduction.....	4
Remarks from leaders	5
Panel Discussions.....	5
Presentation and exchanges of the successful cases	9
Burkina Faso	9
Madagascar	11
Presentation of the study results by the consultant of PAFO	13
Types of agroecological techniques promoted by the FOs	14
Group discussion.....	16
Soil Health	16
SEEDS	17
Recommendations from the workshop	17
Recommendations for Partners	17
Recommendations for PAFO and RFOs	18



Background

Agroecology has emerged as a viable response to the challenges facing Africa's agricultural and food systems and public health challenges. In most African countries the agro-ecological transition is increasingly supported by public authorities to ensure the transition of agriculture towards sustainability and thus respond to the challenges of climate change and erosion of biodiversity, as well as consumer expectations for nutritious and healthy food. The challenge of Agroecology is to support the development of sustainable food systems in the territories, based primarily on their demands, their potential, and their know-how.

Since COP17 (2011), the agroecological transition and the whole range of sustainable production approaches have returned to the heart of the development agendas of the international community. Numerous summits and consultations at the international level are adopting strategic orientations and commitments to support the transition and sustainable production systems. Many bilateral and multilateral corporations are increasingly committed to supporting the agro-ecological transition.

As part of their actions, FO and CSO networks strive to raise awareness and mobilize communities and inter-municipalities to integrate transitional agroecology into their development plans and programs. This dynamic is beginning to yield encouraging results in several countries.

The African continent also faces agroecology and food security constraints, such as land degradation, climate change, population growth, conflicts, political instability, and poverty. Decision-making efforts are insufficient to support the agro-ecological transition with farmers being excluded from the policy and strategy development process for agricultural transformation. Moreover, farmers have limited skills to influence these decision-makers. Therefore, most policies in place are not adapted to the reality of African farmers, who are essentially small-scale farmers operating within the framework of family farming. There has been little or no consultation to obtain the views of women, youth, and family farmers affected by these policies.



PAFO, as a continental platform carrying the voices of over 80 million African smallholder farmers, advocates to influence the implementation of appropriate policies including agroecology. To this end, on 25th October 2023 PAFO in the framework of the partnership with Agricord organized an agroecology WORKSHOP entitled “Exploring the Potential of Farmers’ Organizations for Agroecology and Climate Resilience: Opportunities and Challenges”, as part of its General Assembly, held in Tunis, Tunisia. The aim was not only to gain recognition for farmers' ability to innovate and produce knowledge and results but also to develop a common continental position that will guide its members on programs and policies that relate to agroecology.

Introduction

The session started with a welcoming speech by moderator Celestin Nga, followed by the opening speech of the PAFO president, Remarks of Katja from Agricord who spoke on behalf of partners. Then, there were different interventions related to agroecology and the official opening by the Minister of the Environment on behalf of the Tunisia Government. The workshop was attended by members of National Farmers' Organizations (NFOs) affiliated to PAFO's Regional Member Organizations: EAFF, PROPAC, ROPPA, SACAU and UMAGRI and partners. 94 persons, 34 of them were women. The workshop was made of Five (5) main parts namely;

- Remarks from leaders.
- Panel Discussions on 4 thematic areas
- Presentation and exchanges of the successful cases (Burkina Faso and Madagascar)
- Presentation of the study results by the consultant of PAFO
- Group Discussion

Remarks from Leaders



From left the minister of environment of Tunisia Ms. Leila Chikhaoui, PAFO president Mr. Kolyang PALEBELE in the middle and Katja of Agricord

The PAFO president spoke about the current African agricultural development challenges which include land degradation, deforestation, and food insecurity while the minister of Environment in Tunisia in her speech highlighted the importance of agroecology as an alternative pathway to the current agricultural challenges, followed by a rapid explanation of the Tunisian agroecology situation. This was mainly by giving some examples of techniques like compost making, organic agriculture, and irrigation. The minister also stressed the importance of further consideration of agroecology in the agricultural development agenda of the UMNAGRI landscape and the overall African network.

Panel Discussions





EAFF ceo, Mr. Stephen discussion on the potential of FO

Muchiri the CEO of EAFV discussed on Potential of farmers’ organizations for agroecology and FO-led research and innovation where he said that agroecology is an environmentally sustainable production model and practice. The level of productivity in Africa is in major decline, importations are drastically declining also, and soils are depleted. Commercial farming has been embraced to the extent that we now use high volume of pesticides, fertilizers, and deforestation, there is a loss of carbon capture and less and less tasty and healthy food.

When policymakers talk about transformation, what are they talking about? There is a need for transition. Nature-based systems and solutions have been undervalued in pest management, soil restoration, carbon sequestration, and nutrition value. Agroecological solutions exist, how to invest so that successes can be scaled up? How to document best practices, also for that investments are needed? How to match and adapt the different experiences and best solutions? How to build



markets for agroecological produce? These were some of the concerns highlighted by participants during the workshop.

There is a need for country, regional, and continental analysis of policies conducive to agroecology. EAFV member CAPAD has done such a study already.

In COP28, adaptation should be a major topic and agroecology falls under that. More resources should be directed toward adaptation, now still too much focus on mitigation. More climate finance-accredited organizations aligned with agriculture are needed.

We do not need different buzzwords such as agroecology, regenerative agriculture, conservation agriculture, etc and finances split into these different strands. We need funds that support and help farmers directly and FOs are professional and ready to be direct recipients of those funds.

What role can PAFO play? Is PAFO going to assist in scaling up efforts and in the documentation of the best practices on the continental level? To mobilize resources for those efforts?

PAFO resolution that 1) it wants to adopt agroecology practices in the continent 2) enabling policy at the national level is sufficient, analyze and propose what is lacking. 3) document best practices and match them to value chains in economically viable ways. Has to be sustainable and cost-effective.

Is agroecology attractive enough for youth? youth like hi-tech? agroecology can be financially interesting, not just in farming but also in the linked input markets, there are business opportunities in organic fertilizers, pesticides, and carbon markets (soil and forest), and mechanization is not going away. There are huge opportunities in this new area, all that is needed to grab the opportunities is information.

Roppa: Roppa has endorsed agroecology as an approach to producing sustainable and healthy foods. Different from the industrial production model, family farming in West Africa is agroecological, more or less. Roppa is a member of a regional agroecology network. In COP28 PAFO should speak with one voice with clear messages. Agroecological transition is not possible without serious support from research, government, and other partners. Financing is needed. States



should provide resources for FOs and farmers to accelerate the transition. Roppa will share the latest resolution of the Agroecology Coalition with PAFO members.



Marek from Agri-agencies said that this should not be an ideological discussion. There are themes that are concrete and pragmatic both for North and South. As agroecology was introduced from the ideological perspective in the North by the activists, there has been resistance by farmers, they have felt attacked. FOs are central in the whole agroecological transition. They can document, and do KM. Leading this kind of strategic discussion is important and agri-agencies can accompany such processes. In Burundi, CAPAD is working at scale, rolling out agroecology, they have a training center and planning to establish a master's program in agroecology together with the University of Burundi. EU and IFAD have financed the transition. Agri-agencies are partners but do not want to substitute our partners, they accompany the work. Agri-agencies can facilitate the exchanges between FOs from different continents.



The CSA presentation proposed some reflections related to agroecology development in Africa. This was mainly the consideration of African specificity of the concept based on the development of traditional practices from local knowledge, not necessarily focusing on the political dimension of it like what is happening in Latin America for example. There is also a need to have a reflexive approach grouping many stakeholders including farmers, agricultural development agencies scientists.

The PROPAC intervention also focused on highlighting the current challenges of African agriculture, which include droughts, and flooding. Followed by a proposition of solutions like facilitating farmers' access to organic inputs, implementing agroecology curricula at the national and regional levels, intensifying agroecology mainstream in national agricultural development policies, facilitating farmers' multiplication and access to seeds by farmers, and improving the valorization of local and endogenous knowledge.

Presentation and exchanges of the successful cases

Burkina Faso



Mr. Omar Ouedraogo from Burkina Faso presenting a success case on agroecology

An experience of agroecological production and strengthening of onion value chains in Burkina Faso was presented during the workshop.

Onions and Burkina's economic performance: Burkina is the 2nd largest exporter of onions in West Africa, with around 362,480 tons worth 129 billion FCFA (over 196 million Euros).

Constraints: Climate change, overuse of pesticides, conservation problems, public health issues

Need for FO-RI initiative to promote agro-ecological onion production and provide jobs for women and young people.

Achievements

- Setting up the project team



- A diagnostic study carried out
- Identification of 9 production sites for innovation testing

Lessons learned and mid-term results

- ✓ Existence of varied endogenous knowledge for onion production and conservation
- ✓ Use of locally-produced improved seeds
- ✓ Use of organic manure to overcome the lack and high cost of quality inputs.
- ✓ Use of conservation methods within the reach of family farms
- ✓ Empowerment of women

Other agroecology experience

- Mechanized ploughing to reduce labour time
- Use of locally produced biopesticides
- Crop association: onion and rose, onion and cereals
- Crop rotation: onion and cereals

Next steps

- Setting up agroecological experiments on onion production sites
- Recruitment of Agronomy Masters students for close monitoring of tests
- Study to be carried out on the scientific analysis of experiments and the practice of warranting
- Eventual appropriation of innovations by the network of endogenous animators who closely monitor the EFs.
- Inter-professional consultations to promote agro-ecological onions

Madagascar

The potential of farmers' organizations for agroecology and climate resilience- Fifata/Ceffel case study



MS. Ida RANDRIANASOLO from Fifata/Ceffel presenting a success case on agroecology

Some results and impacts in the case of seed potato production

- 61% of seed potato growers stop using chemical fertilizers
- 29% reduction in input costs (48% conventional)
- Reducing the frequency of pesticide and fungicide treatments: alternating with biopesticides/liquid compost
- Storage loss due to rot is limited to 5% (up to 15% in conventional)
- Margin gains of around 25% compared with conventional methods

The factors for success

- ✓ Based on problems experienced by farmers
- ✓ Trained players
- ✓ Accessible" solutions

- ✓ Economic gain: market opportunities
- ✓ Field-based research
- ✓ Duration and progressiveness ...

Presentation of the study results by the consultant of PAFO



PAFO consultant Dr. Iyabano presenting the results from the study

The consultant started by presenting the findings for about 30 minutes, followed by questions and answers conducted in two phases. Questions were asked by participants from all the regions and these covered technical aspects for clarification, remarks, and recommendations

To reflect the diversity of the African situation, the consultant chose to use the term agroecology to speak about all types of farming practices that are based on ecological principles regardless of



the types and purpose of crops grown i.e., organic certified or not. This also helped to clarify the discussion about whether agroecology can feed Africa by mentioning the importance of ecological principles in pursuing sustainable agriculture based on their actions on all three dimensions of farming i.e., economic, social, and ecological. Agroecology is considered the potential solution for the current challenges of African agricultural production. Examples of agroecological techniques (AET) include intercropping; biological control of pests; use of nitrogen-fixing crops; crop-livestock integration; composting; agroforestry; and anti-erosion measures.

Types of agroecological techniques promoted by the FOs :

Regional Network of Farmers' Organization	Types of agroecological techniques promoted (AET)			Examples of partners supporting some FOs' (members of the regional network) AET
	Soil Fertility Management	Pests and Diseases Management	Soil and Water Conservation measures	
The East African Farmers Organization (EAFF)	-Compost, mulching and manure -Legumes crops	-Biopesticides -Trap crop (push and pull)	Agroforestry and stone-bunds	-Bilateral and multilateral cooperation with national and international NGOs -National policy actors
The Regional Platform of farmers' organizations from	-Compost, mulching and manure	-Biopesticides -Improved seeds	Agroforestry	-National policy and research actors -Bilateral and multilateral

Central Africa (PROPAC)				cooperation with national and international NGOs
The Network of Farmers Organization and Agricultural Producers of West Africa (ROPPA)	-Compost, mulching and manure -Mixed sorghum-cowpea -Legumes crops	-Biopesticides -Trap crop (push and pull) -Improved seeds	-Zai -Stone-bunds and Demi-lune -Agroforestry	-National policy and research actors -Bilateral and multilateral cooperation with national and international NGOs -Agro-companies
The Southern African Confederation of Agricultural Unions (SACAU)	-Compost, mulching and manure	-Biopesticides -Trap crop (push and pull)	Agroforestry	Bilateral and multilateral cooperation with national and international NGOs
The Maghreb and North African Union of Farmers (UMNAGRI)	-Compost, and manure	Biopesticides	Agroforestry	Bilateral and multilateral cooperation with national and international NGOs

The study explored the potential of farmers' organizations in the promotion of agroecology in Africa. The study shows that African agroecology is a hybrid of existing farmers' practices with practices brought with the advent of organic crop marketing.

Group discussion



SACAU delegation presenting during the workshop on left and group work on right side

During the workshop, group discussions were organized on 2 themes.

- Soil health
- Seeds

Soil Health

Evidence of the impact of the use of synthetic fertilizers on soil health

POSITIVE

- High yield in production

Negative

- Soil contamination
- Water contamination
- Increase or decrease soil acidity



Opportunities and challenges for FO in promoting soil health

Opportunities

- Training and awareness on the benefits of organic farming
- It is suitable for smallholder farmers which is the majority of farmers which is the majority of farmers in the continent

Challenges

- The shift from Agriculture to agribusiness with more focus on high yield at a low production cost
- Promotes weeds and introduces new types of weeds from grazing areas into farm
- Not feasible for large-scale farmers

SEEDS

Opportunities

- Emphasizing the production of local research improved seeds
- Before the seeds were from China and now it is in Africa
- Local seed Banks
- Seed sovereignty

What is prohibiting farmers from using local seeds?

- Limited documentation on the availability and performance of local seeds
- Low local seed production

Recommendations from the workshop

Recommendations for Partners

- Facilitate farmers' access to technology for testing soil fertility

- Support the partnership between research institutions and farmers' organizations for the multiplication and conservation of the local seeds
- Increase funding to support African actors' initiatives toward agroecology
- Facilitating farmers' access to organic inputs,
- Recognize and facilitate multiplication and access to local seeds by farmers
- improving the valorization of local and endogenous knowledge.
- set up enabling policies based on the existing diversity of agroecological techniques

Recommendations for PAFO and RFOs

- Develop a study on the impact of agroecology on African agriculture
- Take into consideration the integration of agriculture and livestock.
- Create partnerships between FOs and other key actors in agroecology (IFOAM)
- Define Clearly the PAFO and its FOs advocacy agenda for their engagement in agroecology in the global arena.
- Amplify the organization of domestic marketing of agroecological products besides the current dynamic of organic export crops.
- To develop a clear policy agenda for the African FOs prior to participating in the international and regional agroecology events that deal with farmers' perspectives and defend farmers' interests
- Implementing agroecology curricula at the national and regional levels
- increase lobbying with donors and African leaders to include more support to involve agroecology practice in the national and regional policy agenda
- Involve multi-stakeholders (FOs, agriculture development agencies, research institutions, etc) to promote agroecology concepts based on traditional knowledge and practices.
- Promote the Crop rotation
- Realize a farmers' reading on FORI initiates discussions with Agricord and the European Union

- Identify and mobilize all major programs in Africa on agroecology and climate change adaptation.

