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Transformation now!

A decade on: a critical new book by United Nations' World Agriculture Report (IAASTD) members calls for an accelerated transformation of our food systems

The COVID-19 pandemic exposes sharp injustices and system wide failures of today's prevailing food and agriculture systems - injustices that had already been accelerating over the past decade, which has proven to be the most destructive period of food production and consumption in modern history. In their new book "Transformation of our food systems - the making of a paradigm shift", 40 international experts describe the highlights and trends in food production since 2009, when the ground breaking IAASTD report was published, starting a paradigm shift in the perception of the global food system.

Will COVID-19 and its impacts on world food systems catalyse a real transformation of highly dysfunctional and destructive practices all along the food chain? "Business as usual is not an option" was the provocative message of more than 400 authors of the UN- and World Bank-led International Assessment of Agricultural Knowledge, Science and Technology for Development, published in 2009. It is probably still the most comprehensive assessment of global agriculture. One decade later there seems to be worldwide agreement amongst most international scientists, politicians, civil society and businesses, that our food systems are in urgent need of a fundamental transformation in order to withstand the enormous challenges of today and tomorrow. The climate and biodiversity crises, unprecedented exhaustion of natural resources, rising malnutrition and its health impacts are amongst the most pressing reasons for this. This past decade was the most destructive period of food production and consumption ever – not only with respect to ecosystems, but also the social and cultural fabric of rural communities around the globe.

In their [book "Transformation of our food systems – the making of a paradigm shift"](#), 40 eminent food system experts¹, most of them authors and review-editors of the initial IAASTD, have now taken stock of the developments of global food systems over the past decade. Presenting 13 follow-up landmark scientific reports and UN agreements as well as 15 updates and 13 infographics on key emerging trends and topics, the authors take the reader on a journey to the most important developments. They have been personally involved in the making of many of these reports, and they take a look behind the scenes of politics and science.

World Food Prize winner and former co-president of the IAASTD Hans Herren, together with an NGO representative in the IAASTD bureau, food and farming activist Benny Haerlin, convened an IAASTD+10 advisory group of 16 to help edit the book and compile its key messages. "This combination of international views and perspectives is a treasure trove for decision-makers and activists, scholars and practitioners along the food systems chain," said Benny Haerlin. "It not only talks about transformation, it also shows how it can be done and where it is already happening."

The book is published in the run-up to this year's only virtual [High Level Special Event of the UN Committee on World Food Security \(CFS\)](#), where for the first time agroecology will be at the centre of discussions and where decision-makers will also reflect about global efforts needed to "build back better" after COVID-19. "This book

¹ Marie Josèphe Amiot-Carlin, Colin Anderson, Ward Anseuw, Nadine Azzu, Lauren Baker, Michael Bergöö, Kate Brauman, Marie de Lattre-Gasquet, Maria Fernandez, Emile A. Frison, Barbara Gemill-Herren, Tirso Gonzalez, Benny Haerlin, Jack Heine-mann, Mary K. Hendrickson, Hans Herren, Angelika Hilbeck, Ulrich Hoffmann, Philip H. Howard, Bernard Hubert, Anita Idel, Marcia Ishii-Eiteman, Frédéric Lançon, Fabio Leippert, Jacqueline McGlade, Walter D. Mignolo, Pat Mooney, Alexander Müller, Mayumi Ridenhour, Marta G. Rivera-Ferre, Steve Suppan, Boyd Swinburn, Gonzales Tirso, Eugenio Tiselli, Jan Douwe van der Ploeg, Robert Wallace, Bob Watson, Alexander Wezel, Ben White

clearly proves from various perspectives that the agroecological approach is by far the most important and fundamental pathway to ‘build back better’ and to make the shift towards sustainable food systems,” says Hans Herren. The book is also a critical contribution to the “Food Systems Summit 2021”, being organized under the auspices of the United Nations.

The book as well as the key messages and additional background information can be downloaded free of charge at www.globalagriculture.org/transformation.

Online seminars will take place in early October

In addition, the book’s producers will organize a series of [web-based presentations and discussions](#) with authors and editors, offering a brief introduction to the concept and content of the entire book followed by an in-depth focus on specific aspects that are covered. The first debate will be on food sovereignty and malnutrition, from undernourishment to obesity: What solutions are available, what blocks them and which commercial interests shape the approach? [Check here to register](#).

Further information:

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Additional material (also [online for download](#)):

- [Key messages of the editor Advisory Group](#) (PDF)
- [Content table of the book](#) (PDF)
- [Book “Transformation of our food systems”](#) (PDF)
- [Picture of the cover of the book](#) (JPG, high resolution)

Biovision Foundation for Ecological Development

Biovision, founded in 1998, is a pioneer of change and stands for a fundamental agroecological transformation of food systems. The Swiss foundation, politically independent and undenominational, is based in Zurich and has a branch office in Geneva. It is oriented towards the UN Sustainable Development Goals of Agenda 2030 with a focus on Goal 2, “Zero Hunger”. In sub-Saharan Africa, we provide help for self-help. Together with local partners, innovative ecological solutions are developed and disseminated to overcome hunger and improve the lives of small farmers. In 2013 the Biovision Foundation, together with its founder Dr. Hans Rudolf Herren, one of the world’s leading experts on sustainable agriculture, was awarded the Alternative Nobel Prize.

Website: www.biovision.ch

Zukunftsstiftung Landwirtschaft (Foundation on Future Farming)

The Foundation on Future Farming is a German charity promoting organic and agro-ecological innovation and research with a focus on breeding new varieties for organic agriculture. Its campaign office in Berlin addresses issues of genetic engineering and national, European and global food and agricultural policies and runs an educational “global field” with 45 different crops. Since ten years, it presents the IAASTD and its follow-up reports on its websites www.weltagrabericht.de and www.globalagriculture.org.

Website: www.zukunftsstiftung-landwirtschaft.de

