MINNEAPOLIS, MAY 10, 2016—The Regional Meeting on Agroecology in Asia in November of 2015 marked the culmination of four FAO meetings on Agroecology. These vibrant meetings confirmed a rising tide that we have written about previously: agroecology’s prominence is growing worldwide. The importance of its concepts, tools, knowledge and its emphasis on respect for and collaboration with producers have been borne out by the reception it has seen across FAO meetings on four continents.

More broadly, agroecology has been growing on national and international agendas, ranging from the 2012 decree on agroecology of Brazilian President Dilma Rousseff, to the United Kingdom’s All-Party Parliamentary Group on Agroecology, to the 2014 International Symposium on Agroecology for Food Security and Nutrition held by the FAO and subsequent regional meetings. This growing prominence reflects the important roles of both science and civil society in addressing the challenges facing us and that extend across borders—including climate change, environmental degradation, and continued hunger and poverty. Agroecology is unique in its increasing incorporation of science, practices and movements, bringing together three vital parts of social and environmental change for the better.

As a science, agroecology draws together the disciplines of agronomy, horticulture and ecology, along with social sciences such as economics and sociology. The term dates back to at least 1928, around 50 years after the term “ecology” itself was coined. It can be thought of as the application of ecological science to inform agricultural practice, along with the use of social sciences to understand the dynamics the have led to current sets of agricultural practice, the evolution and context of functional traditional knowledge and practices, and the socioeconomic and political dynamics of producers’ efforts, livelihoods and contributions. The practice element of agroecology translates ecological knowledge into agricultural practice, as well as observing and
learning the costs and benefits of current practices. Finally, agroecology as a movement is important because a system of agriculture which takes into account larger environmental costs and threats like climate change will require the re-organization of a number of social institutions. Social movements and civil society are undeniably an important element of such a re-organization, and hence can be said to be part of agroecology. Further, social movements offer a logical point of articulation for agroecology’s focus on acknowledging and supporting farmers’ leadership, knowledge and local contexts. Lastly, as a practical note, movements can be thought of as a vital part of agroecology, given that effective articulations between farmers and scientists will require a politics of inclusion and community empowerment. In these ways, agroecology’s three elements may also be described more accessibly as studying, doing and changing socioecological relations towards sustainable and socially just agricultural systems.

**DISCUSSION POINTS**

As we wrote in our discussion document for the Africa Regional Meeting, there is strong support in the relevant literature for the most important factors in supporting food security, good farmer livelihoods, productivity and effective environmental management (e.g. for climate change mitigation and adaptation). Although no factor can guarantee success, the factors at the center of each of our key points are associated with higher probabilities of success. Further, these factors are either part of existing agroecology discourse, or are compatible with it, especially if agroecology is paired with the concept of food sovereignty: the rights and resources for each community to determine its own food system. In several places, we have adjusted and added some factors of particular note for the Asian context.

**Key point 1: Securing rights and supporting equity across race, gender, class and ethnic affiliation are vital to reduce hunger, fight climate change and increase sustainability, according to established empirical and theoretical research.**

Agroecology supports, and in turn is supported by, community well-being and the public goods inherent in these factors.

Extensive research and experience to date show that securing communities’ and individuals’ rights ranks the highest in terms of interventions in Asia that will reduce hunger and increase resilience and sustainability. As the IAASTD (2009) reported, “People are the wealth of ESAP [East & South Asia & the Pacific]. Since this region is home to three of the world’s most populous countries, investing in people will yield development dividends.”

A significant part of the current conversations around food security and climate change has focused on production and productivity to meet present and future needs. While this can make important contributions to solving these problems, more and more scholars and community members are observing that it is not sufficient. As one recent peer-reviewed paper states, “there are a series of filters that determine the extent to which intensification is sustainable and contributes to greater food security… unless it meets the demands of both distributive and procedural justice, increased food production cannot be described as sustainable”.

To this point, an important observation is the sizeable impact public goods make on improving food security and health measures (and these in turn support social capacity for mitigation and adaptation). To quote a broad-based and thorough expert analysis:

“For South Asia, while continued improvements in women’s education and food availabilities are needed, three of the determinants should be of particular focus: access to sanitation, dietary diversity of the food available in countries, and gender equality…. National food availability does not feature near the top of the priorities for accelerating undernutrition reductions in either South Asia or Sub-Saharan Africa. This does not reduce the importance of maintaining adequate food supplies, including food production, but simply acknowledges that the scope for it to reduce stunting prevalences is lower than that of the priority underlying determinants we have identified.” [emphasis added].

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Securing rights, Particularly Women’s Equality and Education

Gender has been repeatedly and strongly tied to food security and productive, nourishing agriculture. Around the world, women play a major role in accessing food for their family members and in preparing food for household-level consumption. Women’s access to safe water for domestic use is a necessary condition for ensuring household-level food security. However, this direct link between the right to water and the right to food is often overlooked in deliberations on defining the right to water and in defining obligations related to the right to water. For poor women, food preparation entails collecting firewood and water, an increasingly difficult task in degraded environments. Thus, realization of the right to water becomes a prerequisite for rural food security, especially in degraded environments.

Despite women’s role in ensuring food security at the household level, when it comes to consumption, they usually have the least access to food. Sociocultural-, gender- and age-based inequalities play a big role in each individual’s ability to meet their food security needs, even when there is household-level food security. Women-headed households tend to be more food insecure compared to male-headed households. This has given rise to the phrase, “the feminization of food insecurity.” In South Asia, the low nutritional, educational and social status of women was cited as one of the major factors that contribute to a Hunger Index in the region that characterizes the problems there as “serious.”

In South Asia, the low nutritional, educational and social status of women was cited as one of the major factors that contribute to a Hunger Index in the region that characterizes the problems there as “serious.” Though, too, it is important to note that in Southern and South-eastern Asia, both of which have a lower proportion of hungry populations than much of Sub-Saharan Africa, the absolute size of the malnourished population is nearly 50 percent greater than the malnourished population on the entire African continent. Which is simply to say, the scope of the problems in Asia should not be underestimated.

In this light, agroecology's strong and growing focus on women's rights and gender equality takes on particular importance and potential. The focus on gender in agroecology is still being examined and expanded and is strengthened by the concept and commitments of food sovereignty and the related agroecology and food sovereignty movement. Issues of gender are, naturally, complex and locally-specific and may need different approaches even within the same small community. Therefore addressing gender is not well-suited to the use of automatic processes and is likely best served by adaptive, specific, locally-suited and participatory approaches. Also, although there are many probable benefits to women, men, children and agriculture when gender inequality is dealt with in an effective manner, careful consideration and deliberation is important so that an emphasis on fulfilling women's potential does not lose sight of their rights or place additional disproportionate burdens on them to support and improve community development:

"While recognizing the power of women to lift their families and communities out of poverty, women are not simply instruments for hunger reduction. Women must be empowered and recognized as equal partners—valued for their contributions and knowledge—not because they deliver results but because they are equal with men."

Nevertheless, the needs—and benefits—are clear. Smith and Haddad (2015) note that gender equality in South Asia “is far below its desired level... it has such a uniquely strong impact on child stunting in the region. Continued improvement in this area would likely greatly accelerate reductions in stunting. According to our estimates, if this determinant alone were to reach its desired level, the stunting prevalence in South Asia would decline by 10 percentage points.”

Numerous accounts illustrate the inequalities and even violence still facing a large number of women in the region. Thus concerted action is clearly necessary to support and empower women using approaches that work with whole communities— women, men, boys, girls—to re-consider and restructure gender relationships, responsibilities and resource distribution, in order to secure both the basic elements of safety for all and also the full suite of rights to which all people are entitled. Equity in access to resources (e.g. water, secure land ownership, credit, education) and equity in representation and participation in governance at all levels are vital tasks in their own right but also have the potential to improve food security, resilience and sustainability for all.

Overlap with agroecology

The methods of agroecology require a combination of farmer leadership and knowledge with modern ecological science, meaning that support for education and two-way communication between farming communities and supporting governments and NGOs has repeatedly been seen as a key element of successful agroecological projects. In turn, certain agroecological approaches can provide numerous benefits to communities through conservation and maintenance of ecosystem functions, many of which are
under-valued and/or non-market functions. According to one recent review, examples of functions provided by more diverse agricultural systems include “greater carbon sequestration, greater retention of nutrients, and greater ability to resist and recover from various forms of stress, including herbivorous pests, diseases, droughts, and floods.” Agroecological methods are thus particularly important and valuable in areas of water and weather stress—from droughts to monsoons—and women in numerous regions have embraced these methods for these reasons, among others. And although agroecological systems can be competitive in productivity and profit with conventional systems, especially over the long-term, it is also true that they produce significant non-market benefits that, until internalized socially or economically into production systems, essentially require sustainable, agroecological producers to be sacrificial volunteers to the tune of trillions of dollars in total.

It will be important to closely consider and discuss how and which agroecological approaches may best provide different benefits, such as the potential to mitigate climate change and increase resilience. This should be considered alongside participatory evaluation of which practices are the most accessible or locally suitable according to community desires, preferences, and near-term capacity. Towards this end, we would note that (a) particularly in agroecological systems, best practices raise productivity significantly (which reinforces the potential and importance of participatory research and education); and that (b) rural education, particularly when it increases access and achievement by women, usually both reduces malnutrition and increases productivity. In fact, quoting economist Jayati Ghosh, “government expenditure on education had the largest impact on reducing both rural poverty and regional inequality, and a significant impact on boosting production.”

In sum, improvements in the priority areas aligned with securing and supporting basic rights—from secure rights to land, gender equity and equality, education and water access to representation in governance—would also be likely to increase community-level autonomy, capacity and sovereignty, as well as improve agricultural productivity. Pertinent to FAO’s regional meeting in Asia, each of these priority areas can also gain from, and contribute to, successful agroecological initiatives. One key challenge will be the possibility, mentioned above, that addressing some priority areas—for example, increasing productivity—will not be effective unless other priority areas are addressed simultaneously. This may add additional challenges and complexity to creating successful interventions.

**Key point 2: Evidence implies that improving and maintaining food sovereignty, autonomy and political agency are important levers to support improvements in food security, resilience and sustainability.**

True, collaborative political empowerment and mutual accountability between communities and regional and national governments are necessary to achieve the potential of agroecology.

A common but often under-emphasized observation is that food insecurity, low socioecological resilience and agrifood system unsustainability represent market failures. The presence of food security is a public good that will not be provided in sufficient amounts by markets without government intervention; long-term agrifood system resilience is not easily or customarily included in calculations of value; and contemporary agrifood systems generate numerous negative externalities such that “business efficiency is not the same as social efficiency.” In other words, it is likely that food security will be under-provided by free markets, as will socioecological resilience; and negative externalities will exact costs on society that are not reflected in prices and therefore will not be efficiently or effectively managed without public intervention designed by and with local communities and governments. (It practically goes without saying, but decades of research in environmental justice and political ecology have shown as well that unsustainability, vulnerability and food insecurity are likely to be exacerbated by inequality—marginalized and poorer communities will receive even less public goods and suffer from more negative externalities than is proportionate or just.)

There are many proposals on how to best deal with the problems embodied by these externalities and inequalities. One very strong vein of research and practice towards this end has focused on empowerment and collaboration with local communities—decentralization along with a significant degree of devolution of resources and decision-making authority. Economics Nobel Prize winner Elinor Ostrom used both theory and field research to validate the proposition that greater autonomy for local communities improves the likelihood that they will create and maintain governance institutions that can sustainably govern scarce resources over prolonged periods. Numerous scientists have similarly written on the importance, track record and potential of strong, well–supported and empowering local governance and polycentricity and subsidiarity (strong local governance backed by governance structures at other scales). Beyond the cases presented by these researchers, others have made similar observations specifically in regards to decentralization and local empowerment in successful agricultural extension, nutrition, and conservation of protected areas.
In fact, a common roadblock seen in successful implementation of agroecology projects is very much in line with one of the observed challenges to better conservation outcomes in community forestry: insufficient support and empowerment of local communities and too much privilege and control afforded to “expert” voices. And of course, focused empowerment and involvement of women and girls has been shown to improve multiple outcomes in terms of improving individual and community well-being, both ecologically and socially.

A common element of successful projects is effective effort towards truly open and transparent participation by local populations—which, when the local population is a historically marginalized one, is likely to require substantial public investment and collaboratively-tailored support, particularly from regional and national governments, in order to create and maintain the capacity to participate in the first place. Although support from other actors (such as donors and international NGOs) can lend additional help, accountability has been empirically observed to be important as a feedback mechanism and way to increase the likelihood of success, underlining the importance of responsive and adaptive governmental support. In particular, an important observation for consideration is that of Karnani (2010), who argues that “Corporate Social Responsibility” is conceptually and empirically ill-suited for providing public goods and cannot replace government action. This should be a careful part of the evaluation of the possible impact and viability, for example, of Private-Public Partnerships (PPP), which may have limited potential to improve food security, production and sustainability for marginalized communities.

It is worth noting that in addition to the empirical research cited previously, and theory-building by Ostrom and others, Farrell and Shalizi have recently synthesized research across economics, psychology, political science and network theory to propose that problem-solving is greatly aided by a significant degree of substantive equality among actors, the ability of dissenting minority voices to be heard and for their points to be given serious consideration. While providing the space for this in the context of the significant levels of inequality experienced by marginalized communities is a difficult challenge, deeply participatory models have shown promise and a number of successes.

Food sovereignty

Given the above points, food sovereignty is an important framework to consider in the design and implementation of interventions to improve food security, resilience and sustainability. The concept of food sovereignty can be thought of, on the one hand, as an expression of the human right to self-determination and additionally, on a more functional level, to be an empirically-backed concept that may improve the realization of the right to food alongside sustainability objectives. That is, the elements of participation, autonomy and empowerment at the level of local communities are strong enabling factors and align with the normative principles and movement elements of agroecology, which has often been closely identified with food sovereignty.

Food sovereignty in fact includes priorities of local-scale empowerment and collaboration and originated 20 years ago in part to address the need for rights-, equity-, and policy-based approaches to food production and consumption. Akram-Lodhi has described its basic pillars as: (1) a focus on food for people; (2) the valuing of food providers; (3) localization of food systems; (4) the [broad-based] building of skills; and (5) working with nature [ecosystems and ecological knowledge]. Civil society groups recently reaffirmed these points, and added others, building on the 2007 Nyeleni Declaration of the Forum for Food Sovereignty with the 2015 Nyeleni Declaration of the International Forum for Agroecology. Thus, although many challenges and questions remain, it can be said that the theoretical and empirical evidence and support “from the bottom up” for the importance and potential of food sovereignty, paired with agroecology, is large, growing and strong.

Key point 3: From healthy, empowered people to healthy, sustainable, resilient environments.

Though connections between sociocultural factors and empowerment on the one hand and environmental health and climate change mitigation on the other can be difficult to understand, they are increasingly well-documented.

In an example from Africa, the Soils, Food and Healthy Communities (SFHC) project in Malawi has worked with over 4000 farmers in a participatory project where farmers use agroecological methods in a deeply collaborative process, which has seen improvements in soil fertility, food security and nutrition.

Looking at Asia, in The Philippines, a philosophically parallel approach has led to very impressive initial results. The approach of MASIPAG (the Farmer-Scientist Partnership for Agricultural Development) is based on the following elements:
“Bottom-up approach. Decision-making, planning and implementation within the organization come from the membership. This is coordinated through farmer groups and a decentralised organizational structure.

Farmer-scientist-NGO partnership. The organization is run as a process of mutual, ongoing learning between farmers, scientists and NGOs.

Farmer-led research. Research, including breeding of new rice varieties, is designed and conducted by farmer-members for farmer-members.

Farmer-to-farmer mode of diffusion. Training in the network is largely conducted by farmer-trainers, using a wide range of techniques including trial farms, exchange days and cultural activities.

Opposition to technological fixes. Change needs to be understood in a holistic way, including attention to farmer empowerment and farmer knowledge.

Advancing farmers’ rights. MASIPAG works within a broader commitment to farmers’ rights. These include rights relating to land, seeds and genetic resources, production, biodiversity, politics and decision-making, culture and knowledge, information and research, and socio-political factors.

The results reported thus far include:

- Better food security: 88 percent of organic farmers found their food security better than in 2000, compared to only 44 percent of conventional farmers.

- More diverse and nutritious diet: Organic farmers ate 68% more vegetables, 56 percent more fruit, 55 percent more protein-rich staples and 40 percent more meat than in 2000. The increase in consumption for organic farmers were double those for conventional farmers for vegetables, 2.7 times higher for fruit, 3.7 times higher for protein rich staples and 2.5 times higher for meat.

- Higher diversity of crops: Organic farmers were growing 50 percent more crop types.

- [Reductions in] Chemical fertilizer and pesticide use: Organic farmers had eliminated these chemical inputs altogether but they were still being used by 85 percent of conventional farmers. 97 percent of the organic farmers used alternative pest management techniques such as redesigning the agroecosystem...

- Better health outcomes: 85 percent of the organic farmers rated their health better than in 2000. In the reference group, only 32 percent rated it positively...

- Lower costs: Production costs for organic farmers were half those of conventional farmers.

- Higher net incomes: Net incomes were higher for the organic farmers than the conventional ones, and had increased since 2000 in contrast to stagnant or falling incomes for the reference group...

- Greater overall farm productivity: Rice yields for organic farmers were on a par with those of conventional farmers. But the organic yields were increasing over time in contrast to declining yields of the conventional farms...

- Improved soil fertility: 84 percent of organic farmers, but just three percent of conventional farmers, reported increases in soil fertility.

- Less erosion: 59 percent of organic farmers, but just six percent of conventional farmers, reported a reduction in soil erosion.
Increased tolerance of crops to pests and diseases: 81 percent of organic farmers reported increased tolerance to pests and diseases, but 41 percent of conventional farmers saw tolerance to pests worsening.

Greater climate change adaptation: Crop diversification, agroforestry, windbreaks, salt-tolerant MASIPAG-bred rice varieties, more root crops... community cooperation [and other techniques] all help farmers adapt to climate change.49

These results are impressive, and re-emphasize the vast potential of agroecological methods—particularly with regards to the substantial diversity of diets seen in the experiences above. As noted by Smith and Haddad (2015), dietary diversity is one of the strongest potential contributors to decreasing food insecurity in South Asia.

While this is just one case (albeit a large-scale one),50 similar results have been reported for the indigenous Karen communities of Thailand and Myanmar, where a very high degree of carbon storage appears to occur alongside a very high degree of dietary diversity (including 100 kinds of vegetables and 28 kinds of meat)39, as well as from reports and work from the Asian Farmers’ Association33, the Korean Peasant Women’s Association33, and projects in China and India34. Many of these cases showcase the importance and potential of Farmer Field Schools33 and the System of Rice Intensification—the latter of which has been estimated to provide reductions in external costs in terms of soil, air and water pollutants of up to 97 percent, 78 percent and 16 percent respectively, as well as increased yield and margins.36

In sum, agroecological practices paired with empowering communities with the rights and resources to govern their local environment are likely to lead to improvements in well-being, sustainability, climate mitigation, and climate resilience57, and participatory analyses and approaches appear to practically be a prerequisite to successful agroecological interventions for small-scale farmers.38 Further, in terms of protected area use and human well-being, recent research shows that “positive conservation and socioeconomic outcomes were more likely to occur when PAs adopted co-management regimes, empowered local people, reduced economic inequalities, and maintained cultural and livelihood benefits.” Whereas the strictest regimes of PA management attempted to exclude anthropogenic influences to achieve biological conservation objectives, PAs that explicitly integrated local people as stakeholders tended to be more effective at achieving joint biological conservation and socioeconomic development outcomes,” (emphasis added).59 This further supports the proposition that multiple healthy ecosystem functions are improved in well-managed diversified agroecosystems46, which go hand-in-hand with well-supported, empowered communities able to exercise autonomy and engage in deliberative decision-making and knowledge co-creation.

Key Point 4: The Right to Not Have to Migrate

At a recent agroecology meeting in Mexico City46, a powerful statement was made about the vision of peasant farmers and their supporters: one of the most under-recognized and under-appreciated rights of farmers is the right to not have to migrate. There have been many statements about the worldwide trend of urbanization, and (former) farmers and laborers’ continuing exit of rural areas. Yet the vision of many farmers is clearly neither to leave their farms, nor to continue to in conditions of marginality. Rather, the vision is one of maintaining, remaking, and supporting countrysides such that farmers, farm laborers, and all rural residents can have decent, secure livelihoods. This is the clear implication of food sovereignty48, and clear in the demands of the International Peasants’ Movement La Via Campesina (which has 35 member organizations in 15 countries in Asia), as well as the many other signatories of the 2007 and 2015 Nyéléni Declarations.

Further, when we consider the concomitant benefits that can be seen from improved economic margins for farmers and—the evidence increasingly indicates—higher food prices, the possibilities and importance of rural livelihoods become both more apparent and more socio-politically possible. That is: recent studies show that higher food prices, when they contribute to increased farmer incomes, likely contribute to reducing both rural and urban poverty, although “safety nets” to maintain the food security of food-insecure populations are necessary in the (typically one to five years) adjustment period.53

The reality, necessity, and possibility of supporting improved, dignified, and food sovereign livelihoods for all food and agricultural producers is further fortified when we consider the immense, but currently under- or under-compensated externalities in the agricultural system. Estimates of these externalities range into the trillions of U.S. dollars in agriculture alone, and a recent report by the FAO concluded that natural capital costs of crop and livestock systems may reach 130 to 170 percent of their total production value44. The nature of externalities is that they are real costs borne by society, and without addressing them through internalization or other regulation, the costs are not reflected in prices and markets do not produce proper or efficient results. The fact that we
are indirectly, but assuredly, paying costs that may reach nearly twice the production value of our agriculture and food products means that there ought to be ample potential to boost income and support sustainable livelihoods for farmers, farm laborers, pastoralists, and fisherfolk by properly compensating agroecological practices (and eventually penalizing less-sustainable practices). It is important to note that this aligns with the research: the 2015 FAO report on natural capital found improvements in climate change mitigation, reduced land-use change and water consumption, air and water pollution from holistic grazing, SRI and organic farming, which is additionally in line with recent results by Sandhu et al. (2015).

Key Point 5: Recognizing and reinforcing existing voices

Many of the observations and recommendations we present here have also been supported and demanded by civil society around the world. In particular, the 2007 Nyéléni Declaration of the Forum for Food Sovereignty, and the 2015 Nyéléni Declaration of the International Forum for Agroecology united hundreds of delegates of groups of small-scale food producers and consumers, including peasants, indigenous peoples, communities, hunters and gatherers, family farmers, rural workers, herders and pastoralists, fisherfolk and urban people, from countries around the world, to support the autonomy, rights, sovereignty, gender equality, and sustainable livelihoods of all food and agricultural producers, as well as eaters. Along with rights-based principles of responsible agricultural investment and the right to Free, Prior, and Informed Consent, the Nyéléni Declarations’ documentation of the needs, struggles, and demands of these broad constituencies are invaluable and should be at the heart of continued conversations about agroecology, climate change, sustainability, food security and resilience.

CONCLUDING POINT

In sum, food and agricultural producers are demanding the ability to make a living using sustainable agroecological practices, and all the evidence indicates that supporting them in doing so through autonomy, sovereignty, appropriate prices, research and peer-to-peer dissemination of new and traditional ecological practices, will benefit all of society.

Based on the above key points, we have the following recommendations.

**RECOMMENDATION 1.** Interventions to improve food security, productivity and sustainability should recognize the importance of communities’ basic rights, including food sovereignty, and thus must truly and directly involve them in participatory decision-making on the types of and approaches to appropriate interventions.

**RECOMMENDATION 2.** Correspondingly, interventions to improve food security, productivity, and sustainability will often require the improving and maintaining basic public goods (especially clean water, sanitation, and education) in the context of participatory processes with local communities.

- **Specific case:** Recognize that knowledge and innovation are public goods, and thus intellectual property must be handled in careful, locally-tailored ways that recognize and support the existence and sharing of traditional knowledge; contemporary and mainstream “one size fits all” approaches may in fact do more harm than good.

**RECOMMENDATION 3.** Fostering social equality—particularly, but not exclusively, along the lines of gender—is a vital element to properly implementing agroecological approaches, and will powerfully support the effectiveness of any effort. But, as with all other elements, this must be done with collaboration and methods appropriate to the local context.

**RECOMMENDATION 4.** Experts specifically (e.g., policymakers, administrators, and researchers) will need to use approaches that increase the effective voice of communities, and support increased equality between and among actors, in order to achieve the best results. These approaches should be based on established and innovative participatory methodologies (such as Farmer Field Schools) that can be found throughout peer-reviewed literature and “gray literature” reports.

**RECOMMENDATION 5.** Private-Public Partnerships (and related approaches) should be evaluated very carefully, given that provision of public goods is by definition an area where government action cannot be replaced and will not be sufficiently provided by private interests. This type of approach may not be well-suited to appropriate interventions for food security and sustainability, where significant (positive and negative) externalities are likely to be present and of significant size.
Specific case 1: Land tenure is a complicated, but vital, issue requiring careful coordination between governments, civil society, and private interests. Multiple forms of land tenure should be supported towards providing land, water, and food security, and must be appropriately suited to the community, culture, and ecosystem at hand. Where land redistribution/reform takes place, to be effective it must be truly pro-poor and substantively redistributive: “compensation to landlords at below market price and payment by peasants and workers at below actual acquisition cost... linked to the principle that land is not a simple economic factor of production [but] multidimensional”, with political, economic, social and cultural dimensions not reducible to strictly monetary terms.66

Specific case 2: Carbon markets are often not well-suited to addressing the climate challenges we are facing, and are particularly unsuitable for agriculture. IATP has previously recommended research into how loss and damage can inform corporate climate risk exposure and the design of both private and public sector projects within the Nationally Appropriate Mitigation Actions.67

RECOMMENDATION 6. A socio-ecological approach must be taken, involving local community members as well as social and natural scientists (keeping the Point 4 in mind), in order to best implement agroecological practices to improve food security, sustainability, and resilience.

RECOMMENDATION 7. Use direct deliberation between experts/government officials and community members in order to generate mutual accountability. That is, those giving resource support for the intervention need to respect the deliberation of the community and support modes based on procedural justice. In turn, effective and empowering community participation is more likely to generate mutual accountability between supporters and community members.

RECOMMENDATION 8. Successfully implementing agroecology and food sovereignty-focused approaches are highly likely to require removing existing policy barriers and implementing appropriate policy supports—for example, improving the accounting and internalization of negative externalities, and improving the knowledge of and support for positive externalities. Further, multiple avenues to improved social well-being should be considered, including consideration of the variety of markets agricultural producers may produce for, including local and regional markets, as well as effective increases in income through increased self-provisioning. The diversity of production and markets that can support improvements in food security, resilience, and sustainability is not necessarily well-served by a prioritization of international markets or commodity crops.

RECOMMENDATION 9. Finally, we reiterate our recommendation that future conversations draw from and embrace the conclusions, recommendations, and demands of existing civil society documents and declarations, including but not limited to the 2007 Nyéléni Declaration of the Forum for Food Sovereignty, and the 2015 Nyéléni Declaration of the International Forum for Agroecology; and building on and substantively supporting spaces such as the Civil Society Mechanism of the Committee on World Food Security.

Endnotes

2. International Assessment of Agricultural Knowledge Science and Technology for Development (IAASTD). (2009). Agriculture at a crossroads: International assessment of agricultural knowledge, science and technology for development, Volume 3: East & South Asia & the Pacific. Washington, D.C.: Island Press. Although we agree with the claim, we note here that the financializing and potentially dehumanizing rhetoric of “investing” and “yielding dividends” is problematic and not adequate to the nuances of empowering people towards food sovereignty, food security, resilience and sustainability.

9. According to the FAO’s State of Food Insecurity in the World 2015, Africa has a total of 232 million malnourished people (220 of whom are in Sub-Saharan Africa); Southern Asia has 281 million and South-eastern Asia has 60 million, for a total of approximately 341 million malnourished people.


49. Ibid.

50. MASIPAG’s network extends to 35,000 farmers, with MASIPAG conducting work in 62 of the country’s 79 provinces; 40 regular staff; cooperation with 60 NGOs and 15 scientists from various universities (Watts and Williamson 2015).


54. Watts and Williamson (2015); see also note 17.


56. In addition to previously mentioned sources, see the broad review and specific case study of India in FAO (2015).

57. A further example of these principles can be seen in the case of Australian farmers: Marshall, G. R. (2009). Polycentricity, reciprocity, and farmer adoption of conservation practices under community-based governance. Ecological Economics, 68(5), 1507-1520.


59. Oldekop et al. 2015.


64. FAO 2015.

