



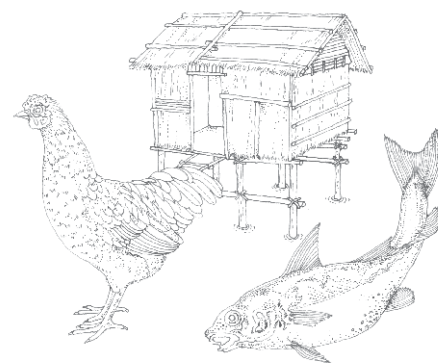
Food and Agriculture
Organization of the
United Nations



FINAL REPORT

REGIONAL MEETING ON AGROECOLOGY
in Latin America and the Caribbean

Brasilia – Brazil, 24-26 June 2015



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ISBN 978-92-5-108971-2

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CONTENTS



2 CONTENT OF THE REGIONAL MEETING

2 Sectoral meetings

3 OPENING SESSION - Introduction to the background and objectives of the regional meeting

8 ROUND TABLE 1 - Agroecology as a path towards food and nutritional security

9 ROUND TABLE 2 - Agroecology and biodiversity: water, land, genetic resources and territories

10 ROUND TABLE 3 - Agroecology: social innovation and technology

11 ROUND TABLE 4 - Public policies to promote agroecology

13 CLOSING SESSION

18 PARTICIPATION

19 ANNEX 1. LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

24 ANNEX 2. FINAL RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE REGIONAL SEMINAR ON AGROECOLOGY IN LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN

Seminário Regional sobre *Agroecologia* na América Latina e Caribe

Seminário Regional
sobre Agroecologia
na América Latina e
Caribe

20 a 22 de junho de 2010
Brasília, Brasil





REGIONAL MEETING ON AGROECOLOGY IN LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN

**FAO – CELAC – REAF – Alliance for Food Sovereignty of the Peoples
of Latin America and the Caribbean – MDA**

Brasilia – Brazil, 24-26 June 2015

The Regional Meeting on Agroecology in Latin America and the Caribbean was successfully held in Brasilia, Brazil from 24 to 26 June 2015. It was organized jointly by FAO, the Ministry of Agrarian Development of Brazil, CELAC, REAF Mercosur and the Alliance for Food Sovereignty of the Peoples of Latin America.



CONTENT OF THE REGIONAL MEETING

The following provides a general overview of all of the relevant sessions of the Regional Meeting and details the key points of each one.

Sectoral meetings

The Regional Meeting began on 24 June 2015 with sectoral meetings between members of civil society, the academic sector and representatives of the participating governments. In both sessions involving civil society and governments, FAO's work in Family Farming and Agroecology was presented. In the meeting of the government representatives, a proposal was put forth to create a Platform to provide a general overview of the policies and legislation on Agroecology in the region, which was positively received by the participating representatives.

These meetings were followed by a parallel event, in which the book "Women and Agroecology" by Emma Siliprandi, as well as the Collection of Rural and Gender Studies by Margarita Alves and the documentary "The Seeds" by Beto Novaes were presented.





OPENING SESSION

Introduction to the background and objectives of the regional meeting

The session was opened by **Adriana Mezardi**, a member of the Rural Women's Movement, who mentioned that this seminar was a historic gathering as part of the three Regional Meetings on Agroecology. She highlighted the fact that Agroecology has been part of agriculture since the beginning of humanity, with the key participation of women in the domestication of plants and animals, the creation of agriculture and the supply of food for humans. Agroecology is an ancestral process which has been strongly defended throughout history by rural populations, Afro-descendants and indigenous peoples against impositions in agriculture, such as the green revolution with chemicals, machinery, etc.; to convert it into large-scale industrial agriculture, promising to eradicate hunger in the world. With the same passage, transgenic crops and genetically-modified organisms appeared; yet it has been seen that these processes have generated economic, social and environmental problems. Nevertheless, in this situation the fight continues, defending our rights to a better quality of life; not just for a few, but for all peoples. There are issues that society must face collectively, and these issues are related to the food sovereignty of the peoples of Latin America and of the world. Members of civil society pledge to continue fighting decisively to ensure a dignified life for all workers in rural and urban areas and the production of healthy food for the entire population. The support of FAO and governments will be crucial in the creation of structural policies that will help us to live with dignity in this field under construction (Agroecology) and the production of healthy foods.

It was also stated that the great transnational company that is destroying the planet is not going to solve the problem of hunger in the world, much less change their actions towards agroecology. Therefore agroecological processes must be viewed as a way of life, or a culture, which goes far beyond a simple production technique. The civil society will continue fighting to change the structures of production, for the equitable distribution of land and wealth. There can be neither Agroecology nor a sustainable planet if some people have so much and others have nothing. In that sense, it is necessary to generate debate in this Regional Meeting, attended by representatives of governments, international organizations, ACADEMY and civil society; to build effective policies that can be applied in practice to farmers, indigenous peoples and rural producers; on issues regarding land ownership, credit, better production conditions, the role of women in the construction of Agroecology, seed conservation, and the role of youth in the process of food and nutritional sovereignty in rural and urban areas worldwide. This is a challenge which has been discussed for a long time and it is hoped that this Regional Meeting will be an important step towards a better quality of life, in all sectors.



Efraín Edmundo Narváez (from the Government of Ecuador, speaking on behalf of the *pro tempore* Presidency of CELAC)

Mr Narváez stressed the importance of the event for ECLAC as its realization will permit a significant contribution to the search for mechanisms and tools to comply with the agreements and mandates reached at the third summit in Costa Rica.

Another relevant point is the issue of poverty; despite efforts, concepts, tools and methodologies that have been created to eradicate it, there are still many challenges and it is a long process during which many efforts have been made. However, it is time for all sectors to join forces and this event is a sign of the effort that CELAC is able to make in order to meet its objectives. It must be clearly acknowledged that specific mechanisms and public policies are necessary to allow Agroecology to be a key element in eradicating poverty and try to raise it to levels which show that sustainable agriculture greatly contributes to families' and the country's economies. In addition, educating society on agroecological issues has to be an initiative with intersectoral participation; from primary education to universities in their respective ranges of action, promoting research to improve agroecological techniques that will allow farmers and producers to improve their work and consequently their income. In general, a comprehensive mechanism is needed to improve the elements of social and environmental responsibility.

Fernando Rodríguez (REAF)

REAF, as an advisory body of MERCOSUR, is defined within an institutional space for political and social dialogue between governments and civil society, in order to discuss public policies and other mechanisms to strengthen the family farming sector. REAF began work in 2004 and has generated some of the most relevant public policies for the sector, as well as gaining recognition and political importance, such as defining the characterization of the family farmer based on his working methodology, which addresses the various issues with accuracy and reliability. This involves an initial approach of holding seminars and workshops with experts from various sectors (government, ACADEMY and social movements) regarding different issues, to generate a functional internal document which can then be discussed in regional and high-level country meetings to design public policies. In addition, all decisions made within this dialogue space are based on consensus.

With regard to the issue of Agroecology, work began at the meeting in Caracas, Venezuela in 2013, using the examples of several countries to assist in its momentum. **The methodological process began with a questionnaire prepared by Brazil, in which it examined the state of Agroecology at the regional level**, which showed much heterogeneity and was important in creating a key entry point for the subject, with institutional approaches and techniques with the farmers, managing the documents and proposals to enrich the debate within each country and helping progress to be made in this area. The great challenge is to provide a broader and improved design of public policies on Agroecology in order to achieve its establishment in the region.



Alan Bojanic (FAO)

The last Regional Meeting led to the implementation of regional initiatives within the Strategic Objectives, “Support for the Latin America and the Caribbean without Hunger Initiative” and “Family farming and rural territorial development in Latin America and the Caribbean,” by the member countries and in which FAO is committed to supporting the implementation of the CELAC plan of action.

This meeting is one of three major Regional Meetings, arising from the Symposium held in Rome in 2014 and has the full support of the Director-General who stated that “The traditional model of agriculture with intensive use of inputs is no longer sustainable; and we must change towards a more sustainable and inclusive model.” From FAO’s perspective, the goal it is to work together to achieve the desired results, allowing for the creation of sustainable agriculture, better nutrition, and the inclusion of women and youth. With the central strategy of Agroecology, healthy eating can be promoted, ensuring biodiversity, along with the recovery and valuation of local products, the development of rural areas and better quality of life for producers and consumers. Latin America has made significant progress in this area through the joint efforts of many countries, especially Cuba and Brazil, the latter having implemented its National Plan for Organic Production and Agroecology (PlanApo) along with other initiatives, such as the Rural Environmental Registry (CAR to use its acronym in Portuguese), which allows production and, at the same time, ensures conservation areas.

Through this Regional Meeting, it will be possible to share the experiences of other countries, acknowledging the excellent work of REAF in the region, which seeks to coordinate the initiatives of the social movements of agriculture and of the government for sustainable agriculture.

Key objectives:

- » to strengthen the institutional frameworks;
- » to coordinate public policies (encouraging the formulation of policies which promote Agroecology, adopting the regional experiences to develop this theme in all countries, ensuring that the agenda of each government includes the topic of Agroecology) (and, regarding that knowledge, transfer it to other regions);
- » to create a working agenda on Agroecology which takes into account the specificities of the countries and which includes all sectors.

FAO pledges to continue supporting the regional initiatives and facilitating the dialogue between the stakeholders regarding public policy in the different countries and regions.

It is important to mention that 2015 is the International Year of Soils; it is therefore essential that the topic of soil conservation be included in the meeting. It is a fact that 30% of soils worldwide are being degraded and we must make a global commitment to adopt the necessary measures for soil preservation, supporting biodiversity and sustainable structures of production.



Patrus Ananias (Ministry of Agrarian Development, Brazil)

The topic is extremely relevant for Brazil because the country is trying to contribute to Agroecology.

Challenges:

- » to produce healthy food for all;
- » to accept the fundamental rights of life;
- » food and nutritional security.

According to statistics, more than 800 million people still suffer from hunger and malnutrition, which calls for ensuring food sovereignty of all people in the countries, the human right to adequate food, paying special attention to our brothers and sisters in Africa. Nevertheless, this will not be possible by only increasing the quantity (increased production) but also the quality (nutritional value) to effectively promote health and life; the need to promote sustainable and agroecological agriculture is therefore clear, without the use of pesticides, genetically-modified organisms and genetically-modified seeds.

The great challenge is to invest in knowledge, education, scientific, technological and social development, participation of universities and civil society organizations, among others, in order to find the balance that will be the foundation for preserving resources for future generations, as well as the production of necessary goods and services to ensure a dignified life for all people.

Brazil aims to assert its position and make an overall contribution with its National Policy on Agroecology and Organic Production (PNAPO, to use its Portuguese acronym) of 2012, which represents a commitment by the Government to expand and carry out the actions to guide sustainable rural development. Subsequently, to implement the policy (PNAPO) in 2013, the National Plan of Agroecology and Organic Production (PLANAPO, to use its Portuguese acronym) was launched, with investments ranging from 8.8 billion BRL (Brazilian reals), equivalent to USD 2.8 billion, with 7 billion BRL reserved for credit; with the actions coordinated by 10 ministries in objectives distributed over 125 initiatives. Work is currently being carried out with the Family Farming Plan, which creates new dimensions for supporting the sector. This programme expands alliances with universities and organizations and will include the topic of local, native and traditional seeds, support for seed production, training support for community seed banks, especially for semi-arid regions and the development of cooperation and research on seed production and seedlings. To this end, it seeks to integrate access to credit, cooperatives, marketing and the expansion of opportunities to develop family farming, all centred on the development of Agroecology.

The recent encyclical of the Pope (Laudato) with respect to the environment should be taken into account. It touches on many issues, including consumerism and excess. According to FAO, there are more than 800 million people suffering from hunger and 2-3 billion (100 million in Latin America alone) who do not have access to basic services. Access to food is a basic human right. In addition, there are the challenges presented by environmental sustainability. These are major challenges, but Brazil is committed to overcoming them.

Another important aspect is maintaining constant communication with indigenous peoples and communities; with the launching of the “Safrá Plan 2015-2016” (Family Farming and Healthy Food), these initiatives are important elements for the conservation of Brazilian culture and the

Agroecologia na América Latina e Caribe

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strengthening of Agroecology. There is a popular misconception that family farming is behind in matters of production, exportation, agro-business; that it is an agricultural system based on the misuse of toxic agro-chemicals and pesticides. It has been labeled as outdated and prehistoric, and that must be our challenge: changing the opinion of the people, and agriculture has to be our base by which to achieve it; by encouraging production, facilitating market access, improving technology, etc. This is a difficult process but we have the means to carry it out, and we will continue working in harmony with all institutions in order to ensure healthy food in the quantity and quality necessary to feed everyone.

Challenges:

The United Nations created the International Year of Soils; countries must discuss this and contemplate what the future holds. What kind of world do countries want to leave for future generations? The issues of water, ecosystems and the social role of the Earth need to be addressed. When will it be admitted the land is tied to food safety, food quality and ensuring a better quality of life? For this reason work must carry on, despite current difficulties, but these challenges can be met and this Regional Meeting can help to gain an understanding of the problems and initiate actions for change not only on a regional level, but worldwide.



ROUND TABLE 1

Agroecology as a path towards food and nutritional security

The round table was moderated by Fernando Rosero (community board for public policies of Ecuador) and included the following panelists: Maria Emilia Pacheco (CONSEA, Brazil), Javier Rivera (MAELA, Colombia), Clara Nichols (SOCLA, Colombia), and Yorlis Luna (IALA, Vía Campesina, Nicaragua)

From the issue discussed, the following key messages were highlighted:

- » the principles of Agroecology, viewed holistically, should be adopted as a way of life, considering that it is the only way to ensure the food sovereignty of the people, achieve a better quality of life and fulfil the basic human right to food. Social mobilization and participation is an intrinsic condition for establishing Agroecology among the people, creating a space for dialogue between the population and the key actors in creating policies that promote Agroecology. In this regard, these policies should also be aimed at creating a socioeconomic reorganization of the land, allowing farmers, rural populations and indigenous peoples who choose to adopt agroecological principles to have access to markets committed to agroecological production, thus allowing them to generate income and improve their current living conditions. Both formal and informal training of farmers, adopting ancestral agroecology techniques and, at the same time, being able to implement new technologies is a key task of the Government in order to implement research projects to generate a relationship between rural communities and ACADEMY, one which fosters the continued increase of agroecological production;
- » the empowerment of rural youth, so that they continue utilizing agroecological processes;
- » promotion of the dialogue between rural communities and the scientific sector to create a forum where they can share and compare ecological techniques, with the aim of achieving more efficient sustainability in their production.
- » the next step is to support the agroecology movement at all levels – local, national and regional – with the creation of programmes which contribute on a lesser or greater scale to applying the respective public policies, which efficiently demonstrate the benefits that healthy eating has on the population, towards a common goal of food and nutritional security (mention was made of examples of various plans implemented in Brazil such as the larger scale “Food Purchase Programme,” in which the Government buys part of the produce from family farming and Agroecology);
- » another important step is a more active inclusion of the Latin American Scientific Society of Agroecology (SOCLA), to continue contributing to the constant process of renewal, in the implementation of new and improved agroecological techniques.



ROUND TABLE 2

Agroecology and biodiversity: water, land, genetic resources and territories

The round table was moderated by Carolina Rizzi Starr (MDA, BRAZIL) and featured the following panelists: Wilberto Ordoñez (Director of the Agency for Rural Multidisciplinary Development Service CRESES, México), Nuri Martinez (La Via Campesina, Colombia), Delfin Cuentas (Coordinator of the Technical Committee for the National Council on Agroecological Production, CNAPE, Bolivia) y Carlos Venegas (Education and Technology Center, CET, Chile).

From the issue discussed, the following key messages were highlighted:

- » the socio-economic problems that all countries in the region face as a result of capitalism have led farmers to abandon sustainable agroecological production systems and opt for increasing production using systems which ultimately are not beneficial to achieve food and nutritional security for the population.
- » efforts must be made to gradually reduce the use of pesticides and GMOs; this will be achieved with the increased implementation of agroecological processes, making it necessary to raise awareness among the population of the fact that a healthy agricultural system and higher nutrient content is more beneficial than increased production with the use of chemicals, in order to achieve the common goal of eliminating hunger worldwide;
- » it is necessary to fight for the indigenous communities in the territory to protect them from cultural infiltration, which can lead to a change in their production systems; thus it is necessary to promote public policies to strengthen and support agroecological processes and their traditional techniques of agricultural production, which must continually adapt to changes. It is therefore necessary to expand and enrich their processes with support from the scientific sector, seeking knowledge, development and sustainability;
- » access to both local and national markets should be strengthened, addressing the issue of economic development, from the perspective of the community and not only based on individual interests. Support should also be provided to communities of rural workers and indigenous peoples in the generation of income to help them improve their living conditions and motivate them to continue their agroecological practices and subsequently encourage others to join this movement;
- » the constant search for agroecological territories with a cultural identity, which increases crop yields and polyculture in significant amounts, should be promoted;
- » the following were presented: best practices regarding the level of agroecological family production for household consumption, as well as for sale in local, national and regional markets; polycultures on different levels representing the largest scale, which helps productive diversification using standard curves for determining production, applying techniques such as terraces or platforms (which, in the case of Bolivia, allowed for extension of the agroecological area in the country), the use of mulch and natural access to water, all of which strengthen seed production and agroecological bio-inputs;



- » mention was made of the different public policies and legislation that help foster Agroecology, implemented by countries such as Bolivia. Under its National Plan for Soil Use, Bolivia adopted its Land Law which has an agroecological approach, facilitating access to land for women producers, who previously did not have that opportunity and promoting the provision of bio-inputs and training to reduce the use of pesticides and to develop agroecological strategies;
- » the other case presented was that of Chile, which has increased its support for agroecological producers after Chiloé was declared a World Heritage Site by UNESCO, recognizing the potential and ability of individuals and communities not only to meet their needs, but to actively participate in activities and work together to assist a larger portion of the population;
- » among the steps considered was promotion of the idea of creating partnerships between farmers, civil society organizations, ACADEMY and local and national governments, to attain a constant flow of knowledge, thus changing the old model of formulating policies by creating a space for rural communities, workers, FAO, NGOs and key government actors responsible for public policy, to make decisions together taking into account all perspectives.

ROUND TABLE 3

Agroecology: social innovation and technology

The round table was moderated by Eric Holt Giménez (Food First, EUA) and included the following panelists: Margarita Gómez (MOCASE – Vía Campesina, Argentina), Antonio Gonzalez (MAELA, Guatemala), Jorge Luis Pozo Menéndez (Ministry of Agriculture, Cuba) and Peter Rosset (ECOSUR – Colegio de la Frontera Sur, México).

From the issues discussed, the following key messages were highlighted:

- » the importance of access to and recovery of lands was highlighted, along with reducing land-grabbing of the territories of indigenous peoples and rural communities, for the continuity of Agroecology. It is therefore necessary to protect such land policies which encourage the use of agroecological practices; experience has shown that the active participation of social movements alone is not enough, but comprehensive support from the government and major stakeholders in the development of public policies which promote the food security of the population is also needed;
- » the importance of the recovery and continuity of the ancient agroecological knowledge of indigenous peoples was highlighted, as it fosters their education on all levels; from informal education with the farmer-to-farmer methodology, with which a space is created to share experiences, to formal education through building partnerships with universities to systematize and enhance the afore-mentioned knowledge and thereby achieve the more extensive benefits that Agroecology provides for the population;
- » the role of FAO and CELAC in the expansive growth and continuity of Agroecology is to support those countries which, due to their respective socio-economic needs, do not have the political will and institutional framework to promote agroecological practices, using the



positive experiences of countries such as Cuba, where the proposed programmes, policies and laws are made effective through the active inclusion of the government in such activities;

- » Cuba's experience with its programme of plots in urban and peri-urban areas was mentioned as it has strengthened Agroecology; its key point is the importance of valuing seeds, yielding positive results on a large scale, taking into account the respective internal and external institutional processes. Cuba's experience is thus an example on a global level; that, in practice, it is necessary to support new processes and strengthen current ones;
- » it is necessary to generate a participatory and appropriate space for youth within indigenous and rural communities, which will help strengthen and empower their identity, thereby creating a sense of permanence in agricultural activities, motivating them to constantly increase their agroecological knowledge and be able to pass it on to future generations;
- » along the lines of empowering youth, the case of the School of Via Campesina in Santiago del Estero, Argentina was presented. It is recognized by the state and part of its budget comes from public policies made effective by the current democratic government. This school is characterized by the intergenerational aspects of its members, encouraging the active participation of youth in the practice of agroecological principles, which is reflected in the appropriate designation of tasks in relation to the knowledge acquired in their training. Another example cited was that of the Agroecological School of MAELA (Agroecological Movement of Latin America and the Caribbean) implemented in Guatemala, which works with ancestral and local knowledge, where participants are instructed in the identification of threats and opportunities in the country-specific analysis to achieve food sovereignty, starting from their areas of work.

ROUND TABLE 4

Public policies to promote agroecology

The round table was moderated by Paulo Pertensen (AS-PTA - Family Farming and Agroecology, Brazil) and featured the following panelists: Alicia Alem (MAELA, Argentina), Leonardo Chirino (ANAP – National Association of Small-holder Producers, Cuba), Cassio Trovatto (MDA – Ministry of Agrarian Development, Brazil), Elbenes de Jesús Vega Corea (INTA – Nicaraguan Institute of Agricultural Technology, Department of Agricultural Research, Nicaragua), Peter Rosset (ECOSUR – Colegio de la Frontera Sur, Mexico) and Roberto Ugas (Universidad Nacional Agraria La Molina, Peru).

From the issues discussed, the following key messages were highlighted:

- » comprehensive public policies on Agroecology are of special importance, involving all sectors, and can be created, implemented, controlled and monitored by the Government, together with the various civil society entities. In other words, there should be a space for public consultation (producers and consumers), which would allow them to know, first hand, the needs of the agroecological sector and how to help its growth;



- » it is necessary to create laws which effectively regulate the different public policies on Agroecology. This issue is currently being approached indirectly in most countries, including agroecological principles within other laws as a way to encourage its development in their respective areas (e.g. soil, seeds, climate change, environmental issues, etc.). Nevertheless, the aim is to learn from the positive experiences of those cases and to have legislation directly related to the promotion of Agroecology, in order to encourage the establishment of true sovereignty with food and nutritional security while, at the same time, increasing productive capacities and reducing social, economic and ecological vulnerabilities (e.g. Law 765, “Law for the Promotion of Agroecological or Organic Production” and Law 693, “Law on Sovereignty and Food and Nutritional Security,” Nicaragua);
- » it is imperative that public policies and legislation establish a differentiated financing system for agroecological producers which can work as an incentive for the implementation of these processes on their crops and allows them to be competitive in both local and national markets, to be able to achieve a better quality of life through these types of benefits;
- » the model of Cuba was presented in connection with the policies aimed at improving agroecological production, applying a model of organization which includes research, training, marketing and the creation of agroecological markets, which serve as a showcase for different agroecological products, placing special emphasis on the recovery of ancestral practices and expanding their area of application, not only in the rural sector but also in urban and peri-urban areas;
- » it is necessary to include the promotion of education, training and implementation of the exchange of rural–technical knowledge and vice versa within the different public policies on Agroecology. Apart from agroecological principles and techniques, this should include information on processes for marketing of products, with the aim of eliminating the middleman, thus gaining direct access to markets and enabling them to be more competitive, attaining better prices for their produce (case of Cuba);
- » public policies should be created to promote the protection of local, traditional and native seeds, encouraging their exchange and protection, by the rural and indigenous communities. The National Plan for Organic Production and Agroecology (PlanApo) in Brazil was presented in the round table as a large-scale example of public policy integration between various government institutions and social movements; it was created to carry out and expand actions to guide efforts of sustainable rural development through the application of agroecological principles;
- » one element presented as a step forward for the establishment of real public policies, focusing on the promotion of Agroecology, is the strengthening of the Participatory Guarantee Systems (PGS), which are locally-operating systems of guaranteed security. They certify producers as users of agroecological practices, which will allow them to have access to a wider variety of markets, not just local and national, but also the opportunity to access international markets.



CLOSING SESSION

The following speakers participated in this session:

Elizabeth Cardoso (Alliance for Food Sovereignty of the Peoples of Latin America and the Caribbean), Fernando López (Alliance for Food Sovereignty of the Peoples of Latin America and the Caribbean), Fernando Funes Monzote (SOCLA), Efraín Edmundo Narváez (Government of Ecuador, Pro Tempore President of CELAC), Lautaro Viscay (REAF Mercosur), Tito Díaz (FAO-RLC), Onaur Ruano (Secretary for Family Agriculture, MDA) and Laudemir Muller (Executive Secretary to the General Secretariat of the President of Brazil). The following are brief summaries of each presentation:

Elizabeth Cardoso (Alianza)

The current model of production, with its dependence on external influences, is in a state of crisis, which has led to a separation from Agroecology. In the context of “Agroecology as a new model,” the following aspects are particularly important:

- » agrobiodiversity
- » diversity of crop growth
- » learning and policy training
- » feminism within Agroecology

The creation of agroecological programmes in five states of Brazil is an experience which has been carried out with the support of FAO and local governments. There is a lack of co-existence between Agroecology and agribusiness, as well as Agroecology with patriarchy. Agroecology should become a model for all of the countries in the world which can adapt culturally and, in this regard, it is necessary to recognize Brazil’s leadership in the advancement and promotion of Agroecology in Latin America.

Fernando López (Alianza)

It has become very important to create a political agenda for Agroecology, which must be linked to food sovereignty and family farming.

Political spaces are opening up for Agroecology (CELAC and REAF MERCOSUR). Comprehensive public policies are needed to strengthen Agroecology.

When speaking of Agroecology, genetically-modified organisms need to be talked about in these forums.

A commitment to work in these areas and enable broad participation of social movements and civil society organizations is required. Alianza, as a social movement, can continue promoting and monitoring this type of work and initiatives.

Not only the farmers (men), but also women and young people must be included in participating in the formulation of public policies.



Fernando Funes (SOCLA)

Mr Funes introduced himself as the Vice President of SOCLA, a Cuban and a smallholder farmer. What is SOCLA? It is a network of researchers on Agroecology in Latin America, following scientific activism to change the traditional scientific approach. Part of this work consists of creating (with support from all levels) sub-regional networks within the region.

The SOCLA Conference is held every two years; the next one will be in October 2015, which over 1 000 participants are expected to attend.

SOCLA provides a connection between the academic world and the socio-political area of Agroecology, linking ACADEMY with social movements. Agroecology is based on science, practices and social movements. Agroecology is a set of principles, not tools in a box. It challenges the current model of agriculture as it places smallholder farmers at its core. Agroecology has a territorial approach (not just at the farm level) and is based on dialogue and knowledge.

It is necessary for FAO to create a global network for Agroecology which includes the scientific aspect.

Efraín Edmundo Narváez - Pro Tempore Presidency of CELAC (Ecuador)

In many of the ongoing discussions, it is sometimes forgotten that humans are also part of nature and it is from that perspective that the issue of Agroecology is addressed.

Agroecologists now have a series of agreements, proposals, disagreements and challenges.

The main challenges require the support of countries, organizations and institutions. This Meeting has been a success, as it has achieved its goals.

The key institutions (MDA and FAO) have demonstrated the capacity and ability to achieve the goals for which this event was created.

CELAC pledges to create spaces at the political and regional level on issues related to Agroecology, which will undoubtedly be included in its agenda.

Lautaro Viscay (Technical Secretariat, REAF Mercosur)

This Meeting aims to change the reality and is not just another meeting, since it has brought important perspectives to the table, especially regarding the relationship between public policy and the agroecological context in the region (Latin America and the Caribbean). Ms Viscay said that she had learned a great deal during her 11 years working in REAF and has observed how Agroecology has clearly advanced within the context of family farming. It is from this point of view that a more qualified and organized debate on Agroecology should be adopted within the regional meeting of experts of the REAF to be held in October this year; a dialogue which includes not only the different practices, but also the principles. Agroecology is at odds with the current agricultural reality and faces the challenge of emancipating the people from the most concentrated sources of power.

Ms Viscay said that she believed that this meeting would be an important turning point: one which would lead the way forward for CELAC and REAF MERCOSUR in their political processes.

This Meeting had already achieved concrete results and should be considered a success; these results should be used to give weight to the discussion in the REAF meeting (during the Pro Tempore Presidency of Paraguay).



Tito Diaz (FAO-RLC)

When FAO began the process of holding Regional Meetings on Agroecology, it was decided that the first meeting should be in Latin America and the Caribbean and specifically in Brazil, due to advances in the region on this issue.

Three Regional Meetings would be held, each one different. The differences between the regions will be the key to their success and that is why Latin America and the Caribbean, as a region, must take a leading role in addressing this issue.

This Meeting provided a forum for political dialogue to strengthen Agroecology in the region; building public policies based on a constructive dialogue among stakeholders is an important process.

Many advances in terms of public policies in several countries were presented. The lessons learned should be used in South-South Cooperation, both within and outside the region, in order to move forward and support other countries which are motivated and which need to create public policies on Agroecology.

FAO's mandate is to contribute to food and nutritional security in order to end hunger and the transition to Agroecology can contribute substantially to making sure that these strategic objectives are met. The questions "How can FAO strengthen Agroecology from a public policy perspective, for food security, sustainable development and health?" and "How can FAO contribute to the future?" are often raised.

1. FAO will provide a knowledge platform on family farming (which is currently active) and also encourage contributions to spread this knowledge.
2. The CELAC platform on public policies can also be used.
3. FAO is following processes in countries where there is a framework for family farming, so that Agroecology can be included in these developments. FAO is aware that family farming and Agroecology are not the same, but family farming is the starting point from which the strengthening of Agroecology through working with national committees can be achieved.
4. A regional agenda should be drawn up to strengthen the capacity of Agroecology, accompanying the work carried out by governments and other stakeholders. This has been a very successful meeting and the process of Agroecology is moving forward. It is hoped that CELAC will put forward a concrete proposal for a regional programme on Agroecology in November.



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Onaur Ruano (Secretary for Family Agriculture, MDA)

The theme of the three Regional Meetings on Agroecology may be the same, but the regional conditions are different.

Within the current process in Latin America and the Caribbean, Mr Runao felt that the days spent working, devoted to Agroecology, have resulted in the fact that it is time to move forward with the recommendations that the participants in this Meeting have prepared.

There has been space for political debate, which revealed the diversity of family farmers, along with the contributions that family farming can make to Agroecology in order to produce healthy food.

An opportunity from Brazil and the participation of the REAF to begin constructing public policies and exchanges has been seen, based on the Brazilian experience of working with the various stakeholders, including civil society.

This inclusive approach has led to very successful results in the different policies that have been developed in Brazil.

There are also governmental and institutional challenges and, in order to overcome them, decision-making bodies and mechanisms for this type of dialogue are needed.

Brazil has a National Commission on Agroecology and an inter-ministerial group on Agroecology. The policy and the national plan were developed through a process of dialogue. What has been seen in the last three days is precisely that dialogue, based on the perspectives of civil society and the government.

It is necessary to ensure that Agroecology is incorporated into public policies. Representatives of the inter-ministerial group on Agroecology will receive the recommendations of this meeting; they will consider each point and discuss how it will be possible to continue to move forward with policies on Agroecology. This issue has already been added to the agenda of the next meeting of the inter-ministerial working group. The example of Dominica, which has decided to make its production completely organic by the end of the decade, is inspiring for Brazil's policies on Agroecology and organic production.



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Laudemir Muller (Executive Secretary to the Secretary General of the President of Brazil)

Mr Muller greeted and thanked the participants, especially the international ones, on behalf of President Dilma Rousseff.

It was very important to keep in mind the fact that governments, social movements and ACADEMY were all there together, discussing the relevant issue of Agroecology. It signaled that they were working on a different model of development for their countries and their region.

This meeting brought together REAF, ECLAC and FAO, as a result of political decisions focused on overcoming hunger which are beginning to transform our country.

Agroecology is part of the Brazilian development agenda. Advances in this area have been made thanks to the work of social movements. Their mobilization efforts have been decisive in advancing this agenda. The PLANAPO continues to be carried out. However, there is still more work to be done. The goal is to continue making progress in the Agroecology agenda of ECLAC, within REAF Mercosur and FAO. The regional political processes must expand the space and give weight to Agroecology, working towards the model of agrarian development that is desirable. This is a quite controversial agenda and the support of the entire society has to be gained in order for this project to be successful; the fight must be continued. Agroecology is one of the most important pillars for the advancement of family farming in the region.



PARTICIPATION

The Meeting was attended by 132 participants, with a strong attendance by members of civil society (55) and regional governments (45 participants from 14 countries) as well as ACADEMY (11).



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ANNEX 1

List of participants

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ANNEX 2

Final Recommendations of the Regional Seminar on Agroecology in Latin America and the Caribbean

Agroecology in the region has been carried out in practice for decades; by social movements of small-holder farmers, rural groups, traditional communities, indigenous peoples, artisanal fisher folk, herders, and gatherers. It has a strong scientific base and is increasingly receiving support from governments through new public policies. The practices and elements of agroecology ensure food security and sovereignty, as well as strengthen family farming.

As a result of the International Symposium on Agroecology for Food Security, held in September 2014 by FAO within the framework of the International Year of Family Farming; the Regional Seminar on Agroecology in Latin America and the Caribbean was held in Brazil from June 24th- 26th, 2015.

Within the framework of the Plan of Action 2015 of the ad hoc Working Group on Family Farming and Rural Development of CELAC and the Ministerial Declaration of CELAC on Family Farming, approved in November of 2014 in BRAZILia, Brazil, and ratified in the Third Summit of Heads of State and Government (San Jose, Costa Rica- January 2015); declared “support for the convening of a regional event on agroecology to encourage the exchange of experiences and to promote policies of sustainable development.”

Within the framework of REAF, in the XX Specialized Meeting on Family Farming of MERCOSUR (Caracas, Venezuela, December 2013), the theme of agroecology was incorporated into the agenda of the Working Group on Climate Change Adaption and Risk Management.

Taking into account the Declaration of Nyeleni-Mali on Agroecology created by the social movements of small-holder farmers, rural groups, traditional communities, indigenous peoples, artisanal fisher folk, herders, gatherers, and youth;

The participants of the seminar; from social movements, the academic sector, representatives of public entities of the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean and guests from other regions, gathered in this Seminar, call upon the governments of the region, along with CELAC, FAO, REAF/MERCOSUR, and other relevant intergovernmental and international organizations to:

1. Promote public policies which boost agroecology and food sovereignty; defined, implemented and monitored with active participation of social movements and civil society groups, assuring the necessary budget for its implementation.
2. Formulate and implement legal frameworks and regulations which are favourable to agroecology, in order to achieve food sovereignty.
3. Assure the social role of land and water through agrarian reforms, land policies, and the guarantee of land rights of indigenous and native peoples and traditional communities.
4. Promote the production of healthy, adequate food as well as the food sovereignty of the region through agroecology; recognizing that those systems have a more sustainable approach to land, water and energy.



5. Recognize and value ancestral knowledge, traditions, local wisdom and cultural identities as a pillar of agroecology. Additionally, the public research institutions should respect and value the traditional knowledge, promoting a knowledge dialogue in their participatory research programs.
6. Foster territorial dynamics of social innovation and technology by creating and/or strengthening the pillars of agroecology and in institutions of an interdisciplinary and intersectoral nature; with capacity to articulate processes of education, research and learning.
7. Develop specific policies which promote the productive organization of women; supporting their agroecological initiatives, strengthening their abilities to overcome the obstacles that they face, the heavy workload, the decriminalization; recognizing their historic role in agroecology and food sovereignty.
8. Recognize and encourage the active role of families and communities, including women and youth, as guardians of biodiversity; especially seeds and genetic resources. In addition, ensure that genetic resources are restored by public germplasm banks, together with social movements; connecting the discussion on food sovereignty with the discussion on seed protection.
9. Create a regional network in Latin America (a shared platform between the governments and social movements) for the exchange of best practices and information regarding agroecology, which complements the dialogue between the academic sector, governments and social movements.
10. Create mechanisms which enable the reciprocity of participatory guarantee systems among the countries of the Latin American region by promoting the link between the producer and consumer.
11. Include agroecology as a permanent topic in the agenda of the working group on Family Farming and Rural Development of CELAC; expanding the participation of social movements and civil society and academic groups in the working group, with the support of FAO.
12. Create a program of exchange for agroecology and seeds, based on the working group of Family Farming and Rural Development of CELAC.
13. Recommend the creation of a specific working group in the REAF focused on agroecology and expanding the discussion on specific instances in which family farming includes agroecology.
14. Create conditions which restrict the practice of monoculture, the use of agro chemicals, and the concentration of land; in order to foster the increase of agroecological production by rural small-holder farmers in the region of Latin America and the Caribbean.
15. Support initiatives of formal and informal education, such as rural agroecological schools; increasing the level of education in rural areas through professional training of rural youth.
16. Recognize the multifunctional role that rural small-holder agroecology plays in preserving soils, water, biodiversity, as well as other ecological functions; guaranteeing environmental preservation in a socially inclusive and economically just manner.



17. Ensure that the agroecological systems are more resilient to climate change and request that resources are set aside for the development of agroecology, as part of climate policies that guarantee food sovereignty for the people.
18. Create mechanisms to promote South-South Cooperation regarding the topic of agroecology, in collaboration with FAO, REAF, and other international and sub-regional organizations.

We wish to thank the organizing committee of this event, especially the Alliance of the People for Food Sovereignty in Latin America and the Caribbean, the FAO, CELAC, REAF, and the government of Brazil for their efforts to hold this discussion and we appreciate the efforts of FAO in carrying out the regional seminar in Africa and Asia. We request that the participation of those from social movements, governments, and the academic sector in Latin America and the Caribbean is included.

We also applaud the initiative of CELAC in carrying out a second seminar on agroecology during the pro tempore presidency, with support from FAO and REAF.

We would like to inform you that Nicaragua and Costa Rica intend to hold seminars in the region and ask for FAO's support.



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REGIONAL MEETING *on* AGROECOLOGY
IN LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN

AGROECOLOGY is the integrative study of the ecology of the entire food system, encompassing ecological, economic and social dimensions.* It focuses on working with and understanding the interactions between plants, animals, humans and the environment within agricultural systems. By bringing ecological principles to bear in agroecosystems through ecological intensification, novel management approaches can be identified, building on key interactions and strengthening “virtuous cycles” in agricultural production that would not otherwise be considered.

“Agroecology in the Latin America and Caribbean region has been carried out in practice for decades; by social movements of small-holder farmers, rural groups, traditional communities, indigenous peoples, artisanal fisher folk, herders, and gatherers. It has a strong scientific base and is increasingly receiving support from governments through new public policies. The practices and elements of agroecology ensure food security and sovereignty, as well as strengthen family farming.”

Final recommendations of the regional seminar on agroecology in Latin America and the Caribbean, 2015.

* Francis C., Lieblein G., Gliessman S., Breland T.A., Creamer N., Harwood, Salomonsson L., Helenius J., Rickerl D., Salvador R., Wiedenhoef M., Simmons S., Allen P., Altieri M., Flora C., Poincelot, R. (2003) Agroecology: The ecology of food systems, J. Sustain. Agr. 22, 99–118.



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DE LOS PUEBLOS DE
AMÉRICA LATINA Y EL
CARIBE

Ministério do
Desenvolvimento Agrário



ISBN 978-92-5-108971-2



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I5143E/1/03.16