

Bilim forum 2023 - the first Forum for Agroecology in Eastern Europe and Central Asia



From July 10th until July 14th 2023, BILIM - the first Forum for Agroecology in Eastern Europe and Central Asia – was held in Bursa, Nilüfer district, Türkiye. The event brought together 22 organizations from 18 different countries, coming from four main sub regions: 1) Central and Eastern Europe, 2) Western Balkans, 3) South Caucasus & West Asia and 4) Central Asia. Other organizations, including FAO Regional office of ECA region, Heinrich-Böll Foundation and Jengalab, attended the forum with a role of support and facilitation, while Schola Campesina played a central role in organizing the forum. The forum has been made possible with the financial support of Agroecology Fund for the organization of the forum as well as the of FAO REU and Heinrich-Böll Foundation for participants travels.

Bilim is an alliance of agroecology organizations from Eastern Europe and Central Asia which brings together grassroots movements, organizations and groups, including peasants and small-scale farmers, indigenous peoples, NGOs, academics, women and youth, and all others who are actively involved in building Agroecology. The community members practice / or promote Agroecology on the ground, with a focus on protecting biodiversity, cultural heritage, placing smallholders' knowledge at the core of food systems. Our work is guided by our cultural diversity and the Nyéléni Declaration on Agroecology, UNDROP¹ and UNDRIP². This alliance is facilitated by four organizations: Schola Campesina, Elkana, Eco Ruralis and ADI.

Over the course of the four days of the forum, the forum fostered the exchange of local experiences on specific topics, including:

- UNDROP and Peasants' Rights,
- Biodiversity and Seeds,
- Right to Land,
- Access to Market
- Solidarity in Times of Crisis

Cross-cutting dimensions were also addressed: the role and the rights of women, agroecology schools and trainings, Bilim platform for knowledge sharing, the Indigenous people's role in Agroecology and the importance of youth for advancing Agroecology.

The Forum hosted a series of practical activities, such as a Seeds exchange between the participants and field visits to a local fresh food market, a local factory for processing food, seeds

¹ United Nations Declaration on the Right of Peasants and Other People working in rural areas.

² United Nations Declaration on the Right of Indigenous People

production gardens, a seeds library, orchards and crop fields administrated by local NGOs and the Nilüfer municipality, illustrating Agroecology in practice.

Outcomes

The sharing of our local practices and initiatives highlighted the need for **major cooperation** at different levels: national cooperation among the organizations from the same country; sub-regional and regional cooperation, specifically for promotion of dialogue with FAO REU. This cooperation builds upon existing activities of the organizations aiming for mainstreaming Agroecology.

A great majority of the community is actively engaged in advocating for the **Right to seeds**, organizing seed banks, seed libraries, seed fairs and sharing, recovery of forgotten species, etc. The forum showed interest in partnership focused on seed-related topic. In addition to practical activities, coordinated advocacy efforts emerged as a natural avenue for Bilim community collaboration in the coming years.

Bilim community is increasingly aware and skilled in utilizing **UNDROP** to advance peasants' rights at various policy levels. A regional campaign to promote UNDROP will be progressively implemented, while national advocacy efforts will benefit from experiences of Bilim organizations.

The Bilim community embraces its diversity, reflecting different realities within the region. However, we are united in our commitment to Agroecology, the implementation of UNDROP and Human Rights. As a community we express and foster concrete **solidarity** for those experiencing crisis situations.

Looking ahead, Bilim forum's next edition will be held in 2024 and will be open to organizations recommended by Bilim network members³ based on trust and common values defined in Nyéléni Declaration on Agroecology.



Bilim Forum 2023 – NGO Campus – Nilüfer municipality (Turkey)

³ Bilim network members are not formally registered and are composed of organizations taking part to Bilim community