

Letter to the Belgian Delegation ahead of the COP27

Concerning the Draft decision -/CP.27 Enhanced consideration and implementation of elements related to agriculture (enhanced Koronivia joint work on agriculture)

Dear members of the Belgian delegation,

During the Bonn UNFCCC session last June, the KJWA drafted possible outcomes for COP27 (see [informal note](#)). The Belgian ngos and farmers' organisations (Solidagro, Oxfam en Belgique, Voedsel Anders, Amis de la Terre, BioForum, Boeren&Buren, BOS+, Caritas, Iles de Paix, MAP, Natuurlijk Imkeren, Quinoa, SOS Faim, ULB Cooperation, Veterinaires Sans Frontieres, Vitale Rassen, Wervel, CNCD 11.11.11, Rencontre des continent, SAWB, Food Forest Institute, Commensalist, Greenpeace Belgium, Bond Beter Leefmilieu, Reset Vlaanderen, Forum Gauche Ecologie, Klimaatcoalitie) welcome this informal note but have noticed the absence of agroecology as a set of guiding principles that will guide systemic action and ensure a just sustainable transformation of agriculture and food systems. So far, the KJWA has resulted in the collection of scientific knowledge. **Belgium must advocate for agroecology and a rights-based approach in the final COP decision and must ensure the KJWA work delivers urgent and concrete climate actions.**

This year only, 800 million people faced hunger because of our failing food systems, not only due to the covid pandemic, but also the current war in Ukraine and the ongoing global inflation and dramatic droughts have aggravated global food insecurity. The dominant food system fails to provide food security and on top of that contributes to 1/3rd of the greenhouse gas emissions. These elements are core to the Koronivia Joint Work on Agriculture (KJWA) that will be discussed at COP27. Agroecological practices are widely recognized as an adaptive strategy to strengthen stability and resilience of food production systems in the face of extreme events due to climate change, and that should be considered in the COP decision on the KJWA. (1)

In parallel to the Koronivia process, food and agriculture play an important role in other initiatives and processes under the convention: the Global Stocktake, the Mitigation Work Programme, International Climate Finance, ‘the Just Rural Transition initiative’, ‘The Sustainable Agriculture Policy Pathway’, and the ‘AIM initiative’, among others. These are all political deals and pathways to support a sustainable transition of our food systems but they **lack ambition, funding and means of implementation.**

The Paris Agreement recognizes “*the fundamental priority of safeguarding food security and ending hunger, and the particular vulnerabilities of food production systems to the adverse impacts of climate change*”. Multiple studies have already warned that **without adequately approaching the agriculture and food system question we make no chance of meeting the Paris Agreement’s targets.**(2) The Glasgow Pact emphasises the importance of protecting, conserving and restoring nature and ecosystems, the importance of reducing non-CO2 GHG, and the urgency to scale-up financing for climate action. **Formalising the KJWA** into a meaningful body is now, more than ever critical.

Making room for agroecology within COP27 decisions and within the vision and mandate of KJWA is sensitive, yet **imperative** for a just and climate resilient food system. In the following annexes you will find concrete proposals to shape conclusions of the intersessional workshops, scientific evidence from authoritative institutions (IPCC, CGIAR, HLPE) backing agroecological practices and lastly guiding principles to avoid the co-optation of agroecology. We hope the delegation seizes every opportunity to voice the concerns of the Belgian grassroot farming and civil society organisations and further contribute to a climate resilient future for all.

Letter endorsed by following organisations and academics:





Ceinture
Aliment-Terre
Liégeoise



caritas
international.be

Vétérinaires
Sans Frontières
Dierenartsen
Zonder Grenzen



GREENPEACE



Agroecology
InAction



SAW&B



beweging voor
gezonde landbouw



SAMEN VOOR KLIMAATRECHTVAARDIGHEID
coalition climat
ENSEMBLE POUR LA JUSTICE CLIMATIQUE

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Annexes

Annex I. Recommendations regarding the informal note and the future of the KJWG

After failing to deliver at COP26, parties did agree that they would try to negotiate a draft decision for consideration and adoption during COP27. Parties could establish an institutional environment to integrate agriculture into the work of the convention, or agree on key technical priorities, whereby no regret options (such as agroecology) would be mentioned in the conclusions. Considering the **urgent need for climate action** in the face of both an environmental and food crises, we urge Belgium and the EU to ask for concrete actions to be agreed at COP27.

The KJWA should not just be a set of workshops but should have **the potential to shape and determine climate policy**. We owe it to protect and further support the many indigenous, often marginalised, communities, who are stewards of 80% of the world's remaining biodiversity⁽³⁾ and the smallholders and family farms producing up to 70% of the global consumption of food.⁽⁴⁾ They should be given the means to ensure their communities' food security and food sovereignty.

The informal note seeks to establish a **Koronivia Committee/work programme**; this part of the note should be supported by Belgium and the EU. The mandate of this committee should be far reaching and should become the authoritative body of the UNFCCC when it comes to adaptation and mitigation activities related to agriculture and food systems. **The CFS**, the committee on World Food security, should be given a primary role, as it is an existing UN body for inclusive and intergovernmental guidance for food security and nutrition. It already has a track record for discussing and addressing the complexity of food systems, food security and nutrition including climate change. The KJWA process should in no way undermine the CFS or repeat the work member states have done on a multilateral level. Instead it should **incorporate and amplify the proposed climate policy recommendations on agriculture made by the HLPE**. ⁽⁵⁾⁽⁶⁾

The co-facilitators have repeatedly made reference to the question of **financing** in their informale note. Despite increased attention for agriculture and food systems to fulfil mitigation and adaptation targets in several global financing mechanisms (The GCF, ODA, CAP, etc), and 90% of the NDCs containing references to agriculture and some even food system, **the GCF still only spends 12% of its funding for agricultural projects**. ⁽⁷⁾⁽⁸⁾

The funds mostly go to large scale projects and entities, are disconnected from civil society and poorly resourced small scale farmers.(9) Belgium should not only advocate for a rise in funds for agriculture but ask for particular attention and funds for **climate resilient small scale farming and food systems**.(10) Collectively the EU is the biggest provider of public climate finance, it can play a key role in shaping the priority of those finances and it must reflect the priority areas identified by our development cooperation. For a just and sustainable transition, climate finance of all Member States needs to prioritise the adaptation of the most vulnerable farming communities (whereas Belgium does dedicate a big proportion of finance to adaptation, most of the financing outside Belgium is currently going to mitigation). The GCF funding should additionally be more accessible for local and grassroots actors by demanding for simplified procedures and decentralisation of the GCF decision making process. The GCF recognizes agroecology as one of three paradigm shifts to achieve resilient and low-emission agriculture, it's time Belgium and the EU demands for the required redirection of funds.

Annex 2: 13 principles outlined by the High Level Panel of experts on agroecological food systems.

The KJWA has had a quite fragmented roadmap. For over a period of 5 years, its workshops focused on several topics: adaptation, soils, nutrient use, manure and livestock system management and lastly the socio-economic and food security dimensions of climate change. If we want to go from formal discussions to concrete action we need a **food system approach** which tackles the diversity in challenges the climate emergency poses.

We encourage the delegation to advocate for the unifying framework for food system transformation, which has been endorsed by **the Agroecology Coalition to the UNFSS**, represented and joined by several African, Latin-American, Asian, and European government actors (amongst others the Belgian Development Cooperation). It consists of 13 principles outlined by the High Level Panel of experts to guide the much needed agroecological food system transformation:

1. **Recycling:** Preferentially use local renewable resources and close as far as possible resource cycles of nutrients and biomass.
2. **Input reduction:** Reduce or eliminate dependency on purchased inputs and increase self-sufficiency
3. **Soil Health:** Secure and enhance soil health and functioning for improved plant growth, particularly by managing organic matter and enhancing soil biological activity.
4. **Animal Health and welfare.**
5. **Biodiversity** maintenance and enhancement at field, farm and landscape scales.
6. **Synergy:** Enhance positive ecological interaction, synergy, integration and complementarity among the elements of agroecosystems (animals, crops, trees, soil and water).
7. **Economic diversification:** Diversify on-farm incomes by ensuring that small-scale farmers have greater financial independence and value addition opportunities while enabling them to respond to demand from consumers.
8. **Co-creation of knowledge:** Enhance co-creation and horizontal sharing of knowledge including local and scientific innovation, especially through farmer-to-farmer exchange.
9. **Social values and diets:** Build food systems based on the culture, identity, tradition, social and gender equity of local communities that provide healthy, diversified, seasonally and culturally appropriate diets.
10. **Fairness:** Support dignified and robust livelihoods for all actors engaged in food systems, especially small-scale food producers, based on fair trade, fair employment and fair treatment of intellectual property rights.
11. **Connectivity:** Ensure proximity and confidence between producers and consumers through promotion of fair and short distribution networks and by re-embedding food systems into local economies.
12. **Land and natural resource governance:** Strengthen institutional arrangements to improve, including the recognition and support of family farmers, smallholders and peasant food producers as sustainable managers of natural and genetic resources.
13. **Participation:** Encourage social organisation and greater participation in decision-making by food producers and consumers to support decentralised governance and local adaptive management of agricultural and food systems.

To make sure the vision of the food system transformation is embedded in a human rights approach we must pay attention to **the implementation of existing international instruments** such as the Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land, on the Right to Food, the ten Principles for Responsible Agricultural Investment and the UN Declaration on the Rights of Peasant and Other Rural Workers(UNDROP), which is the result of advocacy by rural and peasant organisations such as **La Via Campesina** and the voicing of the **Nyéleni Declaration of Agroecology** within a formal and universally recognized resolution. (11)

Annex 3: Concrete proposals for the conclusions of the intersessional workshop.

The informal note which will be discussed during COP 27, has left the conclusions of the intersessional workshop of the Bonn conference open. The Belgian delegation can play a key role in ensuring agroecology is taken note of in the informale note's concluding remarks of the several workshops. We suggest following conclusions to be negotiated by the delegation:

“Having considered with concern the report of the first part of the intersessional workshop (Sustainable land and water management, including integrated watershed management strategies, to ensure food security), the SBSTA and SBI recognized **the importance of considering sustainable land and water management in systemic and integrated manner to deliver the full potential to safeguard food security taking into account the national and regional circumstances and the need to upscale national plans and strategies including agroecology** “

“They noted that **agroecological approaches render ecosystem services for both society and farmers, enhance adaptation and carbon sequestration but require financial resources, capacity building, technology transfer and the co-creation of knowledge.**

“Having considered with concern the report on the second part of the intersessional workshop (Strategies and modalities to scale up implementation of best practices, innovations and technologies that increase resilience and sustainable production in agricultural systems according to national circumstances) the SBSTA and SBI recognized the need to scale up the implementation of best practices, innovations and technologies and **highlighted the importance of taking an inclusive, participatory approach that includes farmers, indigenous peoples, vulnerable communities, women and gender diverse people,**

and youth and avoids the displacement of locals and that combines scientific and traditional knowledge. Scaling up implementation requires technologies, capacity building and financial resources and the sharing of knowledge on best practice, technologies, services and financing opportunities.

“They also recognized the importance of using existing support and finance strategically and improving measurement and definition of financing to better understand needs of farmers, women, youth, local communities and indigenous peoples.

“They also recognized the importance of support for countries in considering agriculture and food systems in national plans, NAPs and other strategies and to identify and include resource needs for finance.

Social and policy innovations such as institutional arrangements, partnerships, financial incentives and farmers’ empowerment can improve an enabling environment. Successful policy innovations include extension services and farmers self organisation towards societal goals and would benefit from inclusivity and gender transformative participation.

Annex 4: Benefits of Agroecology

Agroecology, which includes agroforestry, is a **low-cost, low risk and no regret option**, but is not mentioned in the informal note. The aim of agroecology is to address soil health, (agro)biodiversity conservation, nutrient recycling, input reduction and social equity through farmer-led innovation, participation and transdisciplinary research processes. It aims to achieve adaptation, resilience and mitigation objectives while addressing questions of food security and food sovereignty.

There is **substantial evidence** that agro-ecology can support climate change adaptation and mitigation. Agroecological farm diversification and their positive impact on crop yield, pollination, pest control, nutrient cycling, water regulation and soil fertility have been shown to provide the highest value among all approaches reviewed for effective adaptation, according to a **CGIAR evidence review**.⁽¹²⁾ Due to its high potential of adaptation and mitigation (soil carbon sequestration, nitrous oxide and methane mitigation) of climate change agroecology and its principles has been identified as an **explicit climate solution by the latest IPCC report**.⁽¹³⁾

Scientists describe it with a high level of confidence as highly beneficial to maintain healthy, productive food systems under climate change. The report cites several studies further demonstrating that the adoption of agroecological practices can provide resilience for future shocks, spread farmer risk and mitigate the impact of droughts. One of those studies shows that small-scale farmers across Asia, Africa and Latin America adopting agroecological practices on farms of 2 hectares or smaller see their yields increase by 25%. (14)

Agroecology has the potential to address the current **converging food security and biodiversity crisis**. Shifting access to resources and local resilience, agroecology can't be limited to its ecological practices. Selfreliance, food sovereignty, co-creation and co-sharing of knowledge and equity are its core values. Because of its inclusive and systemic social and economic approach to farming and the food system, agroecology has been backed by many international authoritative institutions: **The Green Climate Fund** recognizes agroecology as one of three paradigm shifts to achieve resilient and low-emission agriculture.(15) **The High Level Panel of Experts (CFS)** has identified agroecology as the most efficient and appropriate solution because of its transformational and systemic approach; it has further shown how agroecology contributes to 10 of the 17 SDGs. **The FAO and the last three Special Rapporteurs** on the right to food advocate for agroecology. And lastly, in its strategic note on 'agriculture and food security' of 2021, the Belgian development cooperation has prioritised agro-ecological approaches and similar methods to render farmers more resilient to climate shocks, to reduce the emissions of agriculture and at the same time produce better yields for a sustainable, diversified and healthy diet. (16) **The Belgian development cooperation** has signed 'the unifying framework for food systems transformation' formulated by IPES-Food, IFOAM, Agroecology Europe, FiBL and the Regeneration International. Within this document agroecology is recognized and upheld as a systemic approach and a set of guiding principles to agricultural and food systems policies.

Agroecology has already proved itself to be a **viable economic model** in many regions of the world:

- In India, the region of Andhra Pradesh has seen an **increase of 15% of the net-income** of farmers practising system-based agroecology. (17)
- In Paraguay, **crop yields** under conventional tillage declined by 5 –15% over a 10-year period, while yields under conservation agriculture increased by the same amount. (18)

- A recent scientific literature review of 56 studies concluded that regardless of which agroecological practices at hand, there is **considerable evidence for an overall positive impact on food security outcomes, biodiversity conservation, ecosystem services and increased resilience.** (19)
- In Europe agroecological farming currently generates **farm incomes** that exceed those from conventional and industrial farms. (despite subsidies being overwhelming directed to industrial farms)(20)
- One long-term study of agricultural productivity in the US showed that during years of extreme weather such as drought or flooding, and even years with less extreme weather such as lower rainfall, organic systems **out-yield chemical ones by up to 40%.**(21)

Annex 5: 10 Recommendations to support research, implementation and further upscaling of AE

1. Define agricultural and policies that are aligned with and adapted to agroecology, with the active involvement and participation of non-governmental organisations and farmers' organisations in the definition of these policies, enabling agroecological systems to be established, developed and sustained to ensure the food security and sovereignty of territories and countries. This should be done by reviewing the institutional, political, legal and financial frameworks that guarantee the promotion of agroecology (an example would be NDCs).

2. Orient agricultural training and research towards agro-ecology, with a focus on action research. The working group should motivate the involvement of government technical services, non-governmental organisations, research and agricultural advisory institutions in the process of agro-ecological transition, which requires farmer led participatory approaches and methodologies, but also the consideration of the environmental, political, socio-cultural and economic dimensions of agroecology.

3. Support the valorisation of agro-ecological products, their promotion and sale on local markets, through measures that allow for healthy competition with products from other types of agriculture, such as specific subsidies, and facilitate access to new external markets that demand agro-ecological products. (reference to CAP, F2F)

4. Make the transition to agroecology a process of overall food system transformation, rather than simply the dissemination of a set of techniques for food production, but a change in technologies for food production, processing, distribution and consumption.
5. Encourage the implementation of an international fossil free financing policy while adapting it to the economic conditions of countries and continents.
6. Promote rational water use and recycling systems (equipment, capacity building of users and monitoring of industries) and the use of renewable energies for water pumping.
7. Support producers in the production, collection and conservation of farmers' seeds, local animal and fish breeds to restore and preserve biodiversity, through agroecological practices.
8. Give institutional and political recognition to local, regional, national and international networks of agroecological farmers. Provide economic support to these networks and organisations, while respecting their autonomy, in order to help their functioning and to strengthen their capacity to participate in research and horizontal dissemination of agroecological innovations.
9. Orient public agricultural policies to finance agroecological projects and support family farms that wish to engage with agro-ecological practices through incentives (adapted agricultural insurance products, risk cushioning, storage and conservation infrastructures and product processing mechanisms).
10. Support the creation of markets dedicated to agroecological products in partnership with local authorities, favouring short distribution channels and setting up national mechanisms for disseminating and sharing information on the availability, location and price of agroecological products. While implementing regulation aimed at discouraging climate damaging production methods and consumption habits.

We, therefore, invite the Belgian delegation to advance more elements to ensure the draft decision reflects a food system approach embedded in human rights and aiming for agroecological food systems. For a deeper analysis of the systemic approach of agroecology, we kindly refer the delegation to the background paper of the Coalition against Hunger on the matter. (22)

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