

Workshop 2: Exploring agroecology principles

Convenor: Francois Delvaux (CIDSE, Belgium)

Impulse talks:

- Pedro Guzmán (Red Nacional de Agricultura Familiar, Colombia) – “Agroecology as a way of bringing social justice”
- Lynne Davis (La Via Campesina, UK) – “Agroecology’s potential for women’s empowerment”
- Judith Hitchman (Urgenci - the international CSA network, France) – “Economic viability of agroecology”
- Michel Pimbert (Coventry University, UK) – “Climate resilience and agroecology”
- Krishnakar Kummari (MIJARC, Belgium) – “Youth, agriculture and rural areas”

After a 4-minute impulse talk of each key speaker, five groups were formed that discussed the respective topics.

Agroecology represents a way of life as opposed to a production focused system, discussants considering its potential to strengthen relationships within and between communities. The potential of agroecology to provide sustainable livelihoods as a way of consolidating peace was identified as an important attribute in post-conflict contexts like Colombia. With its holistic view integrating the whole food system it may also connect urban populations with rural realities. While industrial agriculture has swept away traditional knowledge mostly held by women, agroecology has the potential to contribute to women’s empowerment. It must be noticed that within agroecology, as compared to agricultural science in general, women are more present. However agroecology is not enough to truly break the unjust power relations in our patriarchal society.

Territorial food systems are important in agroecology and their level of dissemination determines the positive impact agroecology can have in rural and urban areas. By using local resources and providing food on local markets, agroecology has the potential to boost local economies. In order to adapt and mitigate climate change, agroecology offers a wide array of possibilities. In all cases, nature has to become our ally again rather than our enemy. Another promising ally are municipalities that may react locally adapted and faster than national governments. The general image of farming has to become more in line with its real importance for our lives. Rural life has to become more attractive and financially secure. A solution that could be worth exploring is having a basic income for the services provided by agroecological farming which is not only about the food but also about the preservation of nature.