

Small-scale and peasant farming versus larger farms

Small-scale farming can be defined as a farming method using very little land compared to industrial farms of the same region, manages smaller numbers of livestock and uses less fossil-fuel based chemical inputs and energy, and often uses non expensive technologies. Small-scale farming is closely tied with more sustainable agricultural methods and gives substantial contribution to the diversification of the agricultural landscape matrix and, in turn, to the provision of multiple ecosystem services.

Agroecology Europe acknowledges that small-scale and peasant farming represents the vast majority of farmers worldwide, and is still of great importance in Europe. These farmers play a vital role for food sovereignty and social cohesion in large parts of the world.

Application of agroecological approaches in small-scale farming has huge potential to meet several of the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) for 2030 (www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/sustainable-development-goals), and especially to halt environmental degradation and poverty of people (mainly SDG numbers 1, 2, 3, 5, 8, 10, 12, 13, 14, and 15).

At the same time, agroecological approaches and solutions can help larger farms to escape the locks-in of specialized industrial agricultural production and initiate the transition towards diversified and truly sustainable systems. Their engagement in agroecological farming is also expected to provide agroecosystem services across wide geographical areas.

Either small or large, it is important that agroecological principles are applied and that farming activities are contextualized to their its social and ecological environment. In this way, Agroecology Europe believes that agroecology can offer viable opportunities to a variety of farms and territories.