

Master thesis proposition

Mapping agroecology and initiatives in Belgium

Context

Agroecology, as a holistic concept, is embracing today a diversity of interpretations, intentions and realities depending on the country considered and its context, history, stakeholders involved, and socio-political environment. Considering the aim to scale up Agroecology, documenting and analysing its development in different contexts is a critical and necessary step to get larger insight and knowledge about the state of the art of Agroecology, and for supporting its expansion and take-up at policymaker level.

The H2020 project Agroecology for Europe¹ (AE4EU) aims at enhancing the understanding of Agroecology in European countries. Through the “mapping of Agroecology” the project wants to provide an overview of the situation and reality of Agroecology in different European countries. This mapping does not aim to be completely exhaustive, as probably not achievable in all countries and as new elements steadily adding on, but rather being illustrative, synthesizing and providing key insights about it. This could be seen as a step on the road to building a common understanding of Agroecology as well as its development at the European level (Wezel et al. 2018) and in the frame of the planned creation of a European partnership in Agroecology Living Labs and Research Infrastructures¹.

In the frame of the project AE4EU, this Master’s thesis will aim at mapping Agroecology through a diversity of key informants and initiatives in Belgium.

Goal of the master thesis

The master thesis will have four main goals:

- Identify and analyze agroecology initiatives according to five pillars: Education and training, Living labs, Movement, Practice, and Science in Belgium. Some initial work has been carried out already².
- Summarize all data, categorize initiatives, and describe and analyze the state of agroecology in the country.
- Write a master thesis (preferably in form of a scientific paper) on agroecology in Belgium as well as a country report

¹ www.ae4eu.eu

² <https://www.agroecology-europe.org/mapping-of-agroecology-initiatives-in-eu/>

- Work in cooperation with other project partners of AE4EU and a further H2020 project (ALL-Ready)

Conduct of the master thesis

The mapping of Agroecology is carried out in different countries of Europe with a common methodology within the AE4EU project. The collection of information is organized according to three major elements/pillars commonly recognized for Agroecology as a scientific discipline, as a set of practices and as a social movement (Wezel et al. 2009). To take into consideration complementary aspects and the European dynamic on the topic, also in relation to the European partnership in Agroecology, two additional elements were defined as sub-pillars for the mapping:

- “Living lab” sub-pillar, as recognised and spotlighted by the European Commission in its project of a Partnership in “Agroecology living labs and research infrastructures”³;
- “Education and training” sub-pillar, to distinguish it from the Science pillar as many initiatives, programmes and training are existing outside the academic and science sphere.

According to these five pillars, data collection will be achieved based on: desktop research, interview of stakeholders and key informants, available data and bibliography.

Condition of the master thesis

Requirements: Master in agricultural science, agroecology – skills in writing and synthesis. Being fluent in French and Dutch.

Host Institution: Agroecology Europe. Reference person: Kira Miskulnig

Academic Supervisor: Baptiste Grard and Alexander Wezel (ISARA, Lyon, France)

Duration: 6 months

Planned starting date: January/February 2023

Remuneration: 500 Euro per month

To apply please send a CV and a short motivation letter to Kira Miskulnig (secretariat@agroecology-europe.org) and Baptiste Grard (bgrard@isara.fr)

Reference

Wezel A, Bellon S, Doré T, et al (2009) Agroecology as a science, a movement and a practice. *Sustain Agric* 2:27–43. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-94-007-0394-0_3

Wezel A, Goris M, Bruil J, et al (2018) Challenges and action points to amplify agroecology in Europe. *Sustain* 10:1–12. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su10051598>

³ https://ec.europa.eu/info/research-and-innovation/research-area/agriculture-forestry-and-rural-areas/partnership-agroecology_en