This Manifesto is the result of discussions among young people from various countries around Europe. We gathered and exchanged our common experiences during the first edition of the Agroecology Europe Youth Forum in France in September 2022.

2022 being the European Year of Youth, we publish this manifesto to express our willpower to unite, build alliances and bring answers to the multiple challenges related to our agricultural and food systems.

1. WHO ARE WE?

We are an interdisciplinary group of young farmers, peasants, students, researchers, activists and other professionals. We aim to build a diverse and inclusive coalition of young people involved in agroecology.

Our food system is built to disregard the common goals of the many in order to benefit the private goals of the few: it is clear that economic growth is not a suitable paradigm to guide it. As the stewards of the current and future generations, we advocate for a paradigm shift and express our will to take urgent action to regenerate the global agro-ecosystems, focusing on food sovereignty and ensuring the health of the ecosystems we all depend on.

We believe that securing the dignity and autonomy of those who produce our food and those who eat it is of utmost priority.

2. CHALLENGES AND SOLUTIONS

As youth, the multiplicity of ecological crises - climate change, the loss of biodiversity, land degradation, water pollution and deforestation - threatens our very existence and our right to live in a safe and healthy environment. The resulting heightened social inequalities and the marginalisation of social groups such as women and low-income communities, especially in the Global South, makes our world an even less liveable place.

Transitioning to agroecology is a necessity. However, we are mindful of the obstacles that may be faced when shifting from conventional to agroecological systems. Therefore, we ask that spaces for communication and knowledge exchange are multiplied by sharing best practices across Europe.

Knowing that any transition often brings different types of insecurities, the agroecological transition should be conducted in a just and collaborative manner. We propose that more space is made for agronomic experimentation while ensuring psychological, economic, technical and knowledge support.

3. AGROECOLOGY IS THE FUTURE WE WANT

Agroecology is an all-encompassing approach that demands a holistic recognition of scientific and social dynamics while avoiding burden shifting to those with no voice, less power and fewer resources - be it within another part of the world, in the future, or at the sacrifice of the non-human world.

Agroecology acknowledges the interdependence of humans to all other life forms, including the necessity of working with and as nature, rather than against or in separation from. While not every living being is a farmer or a grower, all are eaters. We embrace complexity and local understandings of agroecology and do not believe in a single solution, but rather plural solutions that fit the needs of each place.

Food is therefore a connective fabric both universally and within our communities, binding society, tradition and identity. By restoring and respecting the role of food in our lives, agroecology is at the root of solving our social and environmental crises.
A. Pillars of an agroecological food system: the institutional level
1. We demand that food is recognised a common good which cannot be reduced to a commodity or product.
2. We reaffirm that access to food is a human right, as recognized internationally since 1999.
3. We believe that agroecology is a promise of a new system founded on 13 principles which should be respected and recognized institutionally.

B. Pillars of an agroecological food system: governance
1. Ecosystems and natural resources, including land, water and seeds are part of the Commons, and therefore accessible to everyone equitably.
2. The food system is to be governed as a Common at the local and global levels where human beings' sovereignty is both overlapping and respecting the subsidiarity principle.
3. Food democracy (at the citizen level) and food sovereignty (at the system level) are pillars to a healthy, just and sustainable food system, where young people's voices are heard and taken into account.

C. The agroecological system in practice: moving forward through...

Support to farmers and peasants
• Better designed subsidies which support new entrants, ensure long-term land access and create mentoring schemes. Such frameworks should include safety nets that encourage experimentation with agroecological farming systems in order to increase the attractiveness of such systems to young (or new) people interested in farming.

Social justice
• Social policies to ensure dignified living conditions for producers and equal access to sustainable agroecological food for all. Policies should recognize and facilitate grassroots initiatives, such as social pricing, participatory guarantee systems, community-supported agriculture and food democracy initiatives.

Market regulation
• True cost accounting, traceability and transparency for food products.
• Market regulations to ensure just remuneration for all producers, especially those that are engaged in the protection of ecosystem services
• Dismantling all free trade agreements that are harmful to a territory's economic, social and ecological harmony

Education
• Introduction of a curriculum on agroecology in all levels of education. This includes both lifelong training opportunities (e.g., school gardens, opportunities to work on agroecological farms, farmer to farmer training), and food education, which begins with what is being procured for school canteens.

Research
• Promoting open access and peer to peer research, as well as exchange amongst farmers, scientists, policymakers and other actors.
• Actively integrating the socio-economic, ecological and political dimensions to the agronomic debates and science through considering the position and voices of minoritised social categories in all future research.


[3] Committee on World Food Security, High Level Panel of Experts on Food Security and Nutrition, Report #14: *Agroecological and other innovative approaches for sustainable agriculture and food systems that enhance food security and nutrition*, p41, 2019


[5] We use the notion of food sovereignty as coined by peasants’ organisation *La Via Campesina*.


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**REFERENCES**

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