Dear Members of Agroecology Europe,

The first few months of 2024 have been busy for EU agriculture policy advocacy too. As President of Agroecology Europe, I am proud to have been invited by Ursula von der Leyen, President of the European Commission, to the Strategic Dialogue on the future of European Agriculture, a forum of 29 organisations to shape a shared vision for the future of the EU's farming and food system.

Our involvement in the Strategic Dialogue came as outstanding news and a great opportunity to try to transcend short-term policy perspectives and pressures and align systemic actions with a vision that preserves the collective well-being of future generations. Our vision is to transform EU farming and food systems into thriving ecosystems characterised by enhanced biodiversity, energy efficiency, and resource conservation, fostering heightened resilience in the face of economic and climatic volatility to produce fair and nutritious food for all. We envision a shift towards agroecology, creating decent and respected livelihoods for farmers and possibilities for the farmers-to-be, and empowering women and youth as food system actors. The overarching goal is to expand this dynamic transition across diverse territorial and social landscapes, with inclusivity as a guiding principle, fostering collaboration across generations, genders, and cultures. EU food systems and human activities must embrace the inherent complexity of working in harmony with nature, rather than against it.

AEEU's participation in the Strategic Dialogue has elevated our outreach capacity towards EU institutions. This is also thanks, in no small part, to the engagement and dedication of our members. Together with other environmental, farming, and peasant movements and NGOs, our involvement is key to holding the European Commission accountable to deliver on Green Deal targets.

The past weeks, EU agriculture policy has taken the wrong direction, proposing a mistaken response to the farmers' protests sweeping through Europe. The Commission’s proposal to remove basic environmental conditions in the common Agricultural Policy (CAP) feeds the false narrative that we must pick between the environment and agriculture. We demand together with 15 organisations the withdrawal of this proposal on GAEC derogations.

Call for action
AEEU is part of Working Group 1 tackling the question "How can we give our farmers, and the rural communities they live in, a better perspective, including a fair standard of living?". While the Strategic Dialogue necessitates confidentiality surrounding internal discussions and processes, it is imperative to ensure that the diversity and extensive on-the-ground expertise of our membership base are represented.

I reach out to you with this message to extend an invitation to share publications, scientific articles, and, notably, firsthand narratives from the field
in the coming weeks relevant to the following questions discussed within the Strategic Dialogue:

1. How can our farmers, and the rural communities they live in, be given a better perspective, including a fair standard of living?
2. How can agriculture be supported within the boundaries of our planet and its ecosystem?
3. How can better use be made of the immense opportunities offered by knowledge and technological innovation?
4. How can a bright and thriving future for Europe's food system be promoted in a competitive world?

By doing so, we aim to authentically represent our membership base and underscore how agroecology serves as a rational approach to address the challenges of our farming and food systems.

Sincerely,

Lili Balogh
President
Agroecology Europe

---

**UPCOMING EVENTS**

**Exploring Feminism in Agroecology**

8 April, 2:00-3:00 pm CEST
Zoom

The next session of the Gender and Intersectionality Working Group of Agroecology Europe will take place on 8 April at 2:00-3:00 pm CEST. We are excited to have Professor Johanna Jacobi as our special guest for this session, in collaboration with [Agroecology Works](#).

Professor Jacobi will share insights from her exploration of feminism in agroecology, followed by an interactive discussion where participants are encouraged to contribute their experiences. This event will be open to all.

Mark your calendars and join us for this insightful and engaging session.
AGROMIX Summit: Agroforestry for the Future of European Agriculture

17 April 2024 | The Square, Brussels

agromixproject.eu

The ‘AGROMIX Summit: Agroforestry for the Future of European Agriculture’ aims to facilitate and incentivise the adoption of Mixed Farming and Agroforestry systems under EU legislation. The one-day event will provide a stage for an in-depth exchange between policymakers, farmers and researchers that seeks to explore agroecological solutions for more resilient land use in Europe as well as the development of tools to implement these practices.

The summit will include speakers from hosts Agroecology Europe, the EU Commission's DG AGRI, the European Agroforestry Federation, as well as representatives of the agriculture industry and many more. Over the course of the day, summit activities including presentations from notable speakers, a World Cafe session, a high-level panel debate and a Q&A session will seek to build connections and close the gaps between policymaking and the implementation of agroforestry practices at European and national level.

REGISTER NOW!

Join the farm visit the day before! The AGROMIX Project cordially invites you to a field trip on 16 April to a farm near Brussels that practises agroforestry. Policymakers, researchers, practitioners, students, and advocates are welcome to join the visit at Plukboerderij Grondig (Veerderveen 9070 Heusden, near Gent, Vlaanderen, Belgium). It is a local, organic, and fair pick-your-own farm producing vegetables, fruits, eggs, and meat and focusing on fair income for farmers and building the community through knowledge sharing.

Farmer Elise Van Broeckhoven will welcome our group and demonstrate what agroforestry is and how it can be implemented. She will showcase the positive impacts of agroforestry and the reality of farmers’ lives and work to implement agroforestry including its unique challenges and opportunities.

Space is limited! First come, first serve.
Agroecology Europe’s next members’ meeting will focus on risk management for the agroecological transition. Marianne Lefebvre will join us as a distinguished guest speaker to discuss the role of risk perceptions and risk aversion in the adoption of practices and technologies in agriculture, and the environmental impacts of traditional risk management, e.g., on pesticide use. Moderated by AEEU Board Member Olivier Lefebvre, the lunchtime session will discuss risk management instruments conditional on agroecological practices, i.e., so-called green or best management practice insurance, and findings from a recent study on the positive socioeconomic performance of agroecology.

Marianne Lefebvre is associate professor at Angers University, France. She earned her PhD in 2011 from Montpellier University and worked 3 years for the Joint Research Center of the European Commission in Seville. Her main fields of research are agricultural and environmental economics, relying mostly on behavioural and experimental methods. She recently worked on evaluating ex-ante programs targeting transition towards more environment-friendly agricultural practices (including reducing pesticides and water withdrawals for irrigation). She is a founding and current board member of the Research Network on Economic Experiment for the Common Agricultural Policy (REECAP) and is active in the scientific committee of the natural park of her area.

AEEU aims to define its agenda through the participatory engagement of its individual and organisational members. Among the several objectives and activities of the Association, there are diverse possibilities for members to participate and become active.

As a member, you receive exclusive news, opportunities, and event invitations through AEEU newsletters and emails. The Secretariat hosts monthly members meetings as a platform to exchange ideas, network with other members, engage with current developments in the agroecology landscape, and shape the position of AEEU on policy issues.
Become a member for 2024!

Thank you for having been a member of Agroecology Europe and enhancing the European agroecology community. Thanks to your contributions to events, dissemination activities, and monthly meetings, we are having more impact on European policymakers and scientists.

Your joining the movement of hundreds of members—including farmers, scientists, educators, experts—strengthens our collective voice, credibility, and weight to promote the agroecological transition at the European level. AEEU represents this constituency in EU policy discussions and expert meetings.

In order to improve this enlargement of networks and agroecology insights, the Association needs your support this year too. Your membership is activated after payment of the annual subscription fee and lasts until the end of the given calendar year (membership activated on any given day of the year will be active until 31 December of that year). Membership can be continuously renewed or upgraded.

We encourage you to widely communicate about agroecology and AEEU and motivate other people and organisations to become members. Any action, individual or collective, is of paramount importance to scale agroecology in Europe. Do not underestimate the power of your own action. Agroecology Europe can only meet its goals if sustained by an ever growing community of active members!

JOIN THE MOVEMENT
2023 was a year of progress for Agroecology Europe. As the future of farming, agriculture, and food rises on the European policy agenda, Agroecology Europe is proud to represent agroecological farmers and peasants who are transforming food and farming systems. In a difficult political moment, Agroecology Europe continues engaging with high-level European Union policymakers to ensure that agroecology remains a relevant and feasible policy option. This activity report highlights the key milestones of the Association for 2023 in its efforts to drive the agroecological transition and its political, social, practical, and scientific dimensions.

Member of the Agroecology Europe Association Daniela Garcia-Caro recently published an article that discusses the application of agroecology within law and assess pesticide regulation from agroecological perspectives. "Cultivating change: agroecological perspectives on EU pesticide law" was published online by Cambridge University Press in European Law Open, Volume 2, Issue 4, December 2023, pp. 815 - 832. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1017/elo.2023.46.

Abstract: In search of a climate-neutral Europe, the EU Green Deal presented agroecology as an alternative guide for food system transitions through explicit policy and regulatory actions. While the term agroecology is used in Green Deal policy documents, its meaning remains elusive in both policymaking and academic legal research. To explore existing regulatory frameworks’ potential to align with agroecological perspectives for food system transitions, this article analyses pesticide regulation, a core area of agricultural governance, using an agroecological framework. This article aims to contribute to the current legal debate in two ways: it presents agroecology as a framework capable of guiding and assessing law and regulation and illustrates, via a study of EU pesticide regulation, how this framework can be deployed in practice to evaluate legal frameworks.

Daniela Garcia-Caro Briceno MSc is a PhD Candidate at the Erasmus School of Law & Erasmus School of Philosophy of the Erasmus University Rotterdam. Daniela Garcia-Caro’s academic background includes Environmental Studies, Sustainable Development, and Agroecology. Her research interests lie with sustainable food system transformations and bridging the gaps between food system research, practice, and policy. The topic of her PhD is ‘Agribusiness and Sustainable Alternatives’, which aims to explore the stumbling blocks of transitions to an agroecological Europe by looking at the EU’s Farm to Fork Strategy and their proposition for a new Legislative Framework for Sustainable Food Systems.
Featuring YOU

Do you have news to share? Tell us about your project, research, exchange, or experience that has made an impact for the agroecology transition!

We will feature it in the next newsletter. Send your stories to Boglarka Bozsogi boglarka.bozsogi@agroecology-europe.org by June 1 with the subject line "AEEU Member story"!

Workshops, webinars, events

Agroecology Europe hosts and co-organises events, webinars, and participatory workshops to foster connections, build capacities, and place agroecology high on the European agenda. Here are the highlights from the past months!

VIDEOS from AEEU Forum 2023

Focusing on connections between living organisms, nature, rural communities, and various actors in the food chain, the 2023 Agroecology Europe Forum was co-hosted by the Hungarian Agroecology Network Association and Agroecology Europe on 16-18 November 2023 against the backdrop of the Mátra Mountains in the Hungarian town of Gyöngyös.

"Converging movements for resilient food systems" means promoting dialogue between degrowth, agroecology, and climate and social justice movements, strengthening and complementing each other.

Re-live the highlights through the participants’ eyes!

WATCH THE VIDEOS

Open Food Conference

Agroecology Europe co-hosted with Voedsel Anders Vlaanders the workshop "Unlocking the potential of agroecology: From practice and movements to consistent policy developments in Belgium and the EU" at the Open Food Conference. This three-day international conference on the transition towards sustainable food systems took place on 11-13 March 2024 in Leuven organised by the Flemish government under the Belgian Presidency of the Council of European Union.
The session discussed sustainable farming practices, connecting the dots between on-ground experiences, scientific insights, and crucial policy considerations, particularly within the framework of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP).

Read some highlights on X

VIDEO: Participatory workshop in Athens, Greece

On 30 September 20203, Agroecology Greece, a network of agricultural scientists, trainers, and producers, organised a workshop in Athens, addressing the most pressing issues facing the farming sector in Southern Europe with a focus on the Greek context. Through a farm visit and world café discussion, workshop participants exchanged experiences and gained organisational capacities on how to build an agroecological farm project as young farmers, discussed barriers, and generated ideas on promising solutions.

WATCH THE VIDEO

Publications

Agroecology Europe contributes to fact sheets, open letters and press releases, and policy briefs elevating the evidence base on the benefits of agroecological practices. For a full picture beyond the highlights below, be sure to follow the Horizon projects that AEEU is part of.

Sowing Change, Growing Together: Creating a Resilient Food Future by Kushal Poudel

This synthesis report of the 2023 Agroecology Europe Forum is an outcome of the shared learning and inspiration to build a resilient food system. It serves as the representative and meaningful portrayal of collective understanding and vision co-created by
diverse participants of the Forum. This report is a critical outlook and synthesis of presentations and discussion notes taken by the volunteers. It explores the current state and envisioned future of a resilient food system and offers actionable insights for food system stakeholders.

Read the synthesis report

Joint Statement: Stakeholders of all Horizons Stand Ready For The Strategic Dialogue on the Future of Agriculture

In September 2023, European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen announced the start of a strategic dialogue on the future of agriculture to establish perspectives for a future-proof sector and address growing polarisation. As farmers, agrifood value chain and civil society stakeholders, we fully support the objective of “more dialogue, less polarisation” and want to avoid politicising the process. Ahead of the official launch on 25th January, we call on institutional actors and stakeholders to guarantee a safe, inclusive and constructive environment for the dialogue to facilitate the emergence of a consensus on the transformation necessary for our agriculture and food systems.

Read the joint statement

Joint Statement of the Undersigned Organisations in Solidarity with Farmers in Europe—Building Momentum for Agroecological Farming

On 1 February 2024, civil society organisations gathered in Brussels in front of the European Parliament in solidarity with peasants. In response to a call from the European Coordination Via Campesina (ECVC) and the Belgian
farmers’ union Fédération Unie de Groupements d’Eleveurs et d’Agriculteurs (FUGEA), organisations expressed their support for food sovereignty, organic agriculture, agroecology, peasant rights, and fair food prices.

Joint Statement: the EU Must Make Pesticide Reduction a Reality

The undersigned 125 organisations condemn the failure of the European Parliament, Council, and Commission to deliver on a crucial element of the Green Deal: pesticide reduction. On 6 February 2024 the European Commission announced it would withdraw its proposal for the Sustainable Use Regulation (SUR), delaying by years urgently needed action to reduce the use and risks of synthetic pesticides in Europe. By failing to adopt an ambitious pesticide reduction law, the EU institutions betray more than a million citizens across Europe who expressed the pressing need to reduce pesticides, and to support farmers in doing so.

Open Letter: Nature-Based Water Resilience Cannot Wait

In the face of more intense and frequent extreme weather events related to climate change, the EU should accelerate its action to address recurrent water scarcity and protect society against the effects of droughts, floods, wildfires and sea level rise. Nearly 30 organisations, including NGOs, city networks, sustainable farmers, trade unions and professional associations, are calling on European Commission President, Ursula von der Leyen, to put the nature-based EU water resilience initiative back on the agenda before the 2024 EU elections.
Joint Letter to the EU Commission to Reconsider the Loosening of the CAP’s Green Architecture

We, the undersigned European coalitions and civil society organisations, who work every day for an agroecological and fair transition toward sustainable food systems, including a better Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) in line with the European Green Deal, are deeply concerned by the latest measures taken by the European Commission and the recent announcements made by both the EC and the Belgian Presidency of the Council regarding the green architecture of the CAP.

Read the joint letter

Open Letter: Civil Society Organisations Urge the Council of the European Union to Strengthen EU Water Legislation to Protect European Waters and Citizens from Pesticide Pollution

With this letter, the undersigned civil society organisations express their deepest concerns about the current attempt to weaken the ambition of the European Commission’s proposal amending the Water Framework Directive (WFD), the Groundwater Directive (GWD), and the Environmental Quality Standards Directive (EQSD). Setting new legislative standards to address water pollution is a critical step to protect European water resources and citizens’ health and halt the biodiversity crisis. It is an opportunity we cannot afford to miss and we are calling upon you for your support in view of the upcoming discussions at the European Council.
Joint Request to Withdraw the EU Commission’s Proposal to Revise the CAP

Letter to EU Commission President Ursula von der Leyen urging her to withdraw the CAP legislative proposal and to abide by Union law and the Better Regulations Guidelines. This will help to guarantee that any future initiatives on EU agriculture respect the well-established safeguards for a high level of transparency, public participation and evidence-based decision-making. It will also help to ensure that all decisions likely to affect farmers, the environment and human health are taken in full consideration of the interests of society as a whole.

Scientific papers

The socio-economic performance of agroecology. A review
Ioanna Mouratiadou, Alexander Wezel, Kintan Kamilia, Angelica Marchetti, Maria Luisa Paracchini, Paolo Bàrberi
Abstract: Agroecology is identified as an important solution to increase the sustainability of agricultural and food systems. Despite the increasing number of publications assessing the socio-economic outcomes of agroecology, very few studies have consolidated the scattered results obtained on various case studies. This paper provides new insights by consolidating evidence on the varied socio-economic effects of agroecology across a large number of cases at a global level. The results indicate an overall favourable potential for farms to benefit from a positive socio-economic performance with the use of agroecological practices.

Read the press release
Download the publication

This newsletter reflects the views only of the authors. The European Union, the Fondation de France, or the Fondation Ecotone cannot be held responsible for any use of the information contained therein.