

A unifying framework for food systems transformation

A call for governments,
private companies &
civil society to adopt
13 key principles





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The need for transformational change in global agri-food systems has now been widely acknowledged in order to address the climate emergency and the growing environmental, socio-economic and health challenges these systems generate. Today's dominant agri-food systems – largely driven by an industrial logic of economies of scale, intensification, specialization, and uniformization – are providing neither food security nor adequate nutrition for all. Moving us dangerously beyond the 'Planetary Boundaries' within which humanity can continue to safely operate, these food systems are undermining the very foundation they rely on by destroying soil fertility and biodiversity, over-exploiting water resources, polluting the soil, air and water, and contributing more GHG emissions than any other sector.

Addressing these challenges cannot be achieved alone by incremental improvements to the current industrial model. Instead, a bold paradigm shift is needed to redesign our agri-food systems. Food systems reform will prove critical to meet the Sustainable Development Goals, the targets of the Paris Climate Agreement and Convention on Biological Diversity, and to uphold the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Peasants and Other People Working in Rural Areas.

To break away from the current industrial logic, agroecology is increasingly prominent in the discourse on the future of agriculture and food systems. At the same time, steady growth of the organic market is responding to rising consumer demands for healthy, sustainably produced food. And alternative terms, such as regenerative agriculture, ecological organic agriculture, and others are being widely taken up in different regions of the world. Each seeking to transform agri-food systems in an integrated way, these different approaches find common ground in upholding all 13 principles [1] outlined by the High Level Panel of Experts on Food Security and Nutrition (HLPE) to guide the transformation we need (see box below).

In light of the urgent need for agri-food systems transformation and the opportunities being presented by the approaches mentioned above, we, the undersigned organizations and individuals:

- Stress the urgent need for transformational change in agriculture and food systems in order to reach the Sustainable Development Goals and the targets of the Paris Climate Agreement and Convention on Biological Diversity;
- Adhere to the above 13 principles in our own actions, and advocate for their widespread adoption to guide agri-food systems transformation;
- Join forces to call for - and contribute to - the necessary transformation, taking a rights-based approach;
- Recognize and respect indigenous food systems and indigenous knowledge and their contribution to this transformation;
- Warn against 'green washing' and 'co-optation' attempts and the 'capture' of terminologies such as agroecology, regenerative agriculture, etc. without adhering to all of the 13 principles;

[1] HLPE, 2019. <http://www.fao.org/3/ca5602en/ca5602en.pdf>



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- Call on governments to:
 - Implement a participatory, coherent policy development approach, in order to create an enabling and supportive environment and provide incentives to transform agriculture and food systems in accordance with the 13 principles, and to respect, protect and fulfil the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Peasants and Other People Working in Rural Areas;
 - Shift investments towards transdisciplinary, participatory research and co-innovation with farmers and other actors in the food system to accelerate the transformation;
 - Strengthen systems thinking and participatory research in education curricula;
 - Increase investments in independent public extension and advisory services that support the transformation towards diversified food and farming systems in accordance with the 13 principles;
 - Expand and support participatory territorial governance of food systems, and ensure policy alignment between local and national levels of government;
 - Support local and territorial markets in the production and procurement of foods from diversified farming systems that implement the 13 principles.
 - Call on international organizations to:
 - Mainstream agri-food systems transformation based on the 13 principles in their programmes;
 - Facilitate the cooperation between different global movements that aim for this transformation;
 - Actively participate in the FAO-led Scaling-up Agroecology initiative;
 - Re-orient international research towards systems that implement the 13 principles.
 - Call on the private sector to:
 - Adhere to the 13 principles of transformation;
 - Support the diversification of production systems and diets;
 - Support the development of healthy food retail environments to improve access to healthy, nutritious and sustainably-grown foods;
 - Ensure adequate prices to producers and respect the rights of food and farm workers.
 - Call on civil society to:
 - Advocate for urgent agri-food systems transformation based on the 13 principles;
 - Denounce 'green washing' and 'co-optation' attempts;
 - Build bridges between likeminded organizations working towards food system transformation.
 - Call on consumers to:
 - Prioritize the purchase of products issued from local and diversified farming systems that implement the 13 principles.
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BOX: Principles to guide agriculture and food systems transformation

1. **Recycling.** Preferentially use local renewable resources and close as far as possible resource cycles of nutrients and biomass.
2. **Input reduction.** Reduce or eliminate dependency on purchased inputs and increase self-sufficiency
3. **Soil health.** Secure and enhance soil health and functioning for improved plant growth, particularly by managing organic matter and enhancing soil biological activity.
4. **Animal health.** Ensure animal health and welfare.
5. **Biodiversity.** Maintain and enhance diversity of species, functional diversity and genetic resources and thereby maintain overall agroecosystem biodiversity in time and space at field, farm and landscape scales.
6. **Synergy.** Enhance positive ecological interaction, synergy, integration and complementarity among the elements of agroecosystems (animals, crops, trees, soil and water).
7. **Economic diversification.** Diversify on-farm incomes by ensuring that small-scale farmers have greater financial independence and value addition opportunities while enabling them to respond to demand from consumers.
8. **Co-creation of knowledge.** Enhance co-creation and horizontal sharing of knowledge including local and scientific innovation, especially through farmer-to-farmer exchange.
9. **Social values and diets.** Build food systems based on the culture, identity, tradition, social and gender equity of local communities that provide healthy, diversified, seasonally and culturally appropriate diets.
10. **Fairness.** Support dignified and robust livelihoods for all actors engaged in food systems, especially small-scale food producers, based on fair trade, fair employment and fair treatment of intellectual property rights.
11. **Connectivity.** Ensure proximity and confidence between producers and consumers through promotion of fair and short distribution networks and by re-embedding food systems into local economies.
12. **Land and natural resource governance.** Strengthen institutional arrangements to improve, including the recognition and support of family farmers, smallholders and peasant food producers as sustainable managers of natural and genetic resources.
13. **Participation.** Encourage social organization and greater participation in decision-making by food producers and consumers to support decentralized governance and local adaptive management of agricultural and food systems.



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