



Agroecologically-conducive policies: A review of recent advances and remaining challenges

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Rationale

Increasing agreement on need for food system reforms which are in line with the principles of agroecology

Momentum building at global, national and local levels for reforms in support of agroecology principles – across different farming systems and levels of agricultural transformation

Progress on identification of needs for wider scale adoption of agroecology but lack of discussion of precise policy measures and actions that can be taken

Purpose of Paper

To provide a review of recent advances in policy developments that might be conducive to agroecological transitions and associated challenges to their implementation



Methodology

The paper sets out to (a) identify the types of specific policy measures that can have a significant effect on the application of the agroecological principles and (b) provide examples of actual policy measures in practice by regional, national or local governments.

It also aimed to review the success of these policy measures, but there was little available evidence (many policy measures are relatively new).

Applied the FAO Food and Agriculture Policy Decision Analysis framework and adapted it to include elements of the FAO HLPE food system framework to provide for a wide range of thematic areas (producer, consumer, market, macro/trade and cross cutting) and types of policy measures (taxes, subsidies, control measures, etc.).

Used expert knowledge, FAO AgroecologyLex database and reviewed literature to identify examples of facilitating, and inhibiting policies.

Our intention is to build on this initial start and welcome contributions



High Level Findings

A few countries have put forward policies or strategies that specifically aim to foster wider practice of multiple agroecology principles (e.g. France, Brazil, Nicaragua....);

Many more countries (or regions/locations) have enacted policies that may not explicitly mention agroecology, yet align closely with one or more principles

The comprehensive and sustained follow through of policies enacted has proved to be a challenge in many instances (change of government, lack of understanding of implementation requirements, e.g.)

Policies that inhibit the practice of agroecology often remain in place at the same time



Consumer Oriented Policies

<p>Taxes/subsidies</p>	<p>Consumption taxes on highly processed, non-nutritious foods or tax exemptions on healthy and sustainable foods.</p>	<p>Mexico – sugar sweetened beverage tax (2014)</p> <p>Chile –raised tax on high sugar sweetened drinks and lowered tax on drinks with low sugar content in (2014)</p>
<p>Nutritional and health assistance</p>	<p>Information campaigns to increase the demand for healthy and/or sustainable foods.</p> <p>Develop food composition tables and healthy and sustainable dietary guidelines.</p> <p>Support use of labels that help consumers select the most nutritious or healthy food item</p> <p>Encourage food retailers to feature nutritious foods in their displays and marketing communications.</p>	<p>Nourishing India: National Nutrition Strategy (2016)</p> <p>India National Nutrition Mission (2018)</p> <p>Chile’s Food Labelling and Advertizing Law (2016)</p>

Producer Oriented Policies

<p>Production support</p>	<p>Reduce input subsidies that favor the use of chemicals and the production of less nutritious crops.</p> <p>Pesticide reduction and regulation policies, and promotion of IPM.</p> <p>Train public extension officers in AE principles and practices.</p> <p>Enable long-term, low cost-financing for environmentally friendly farming practices</p> <p>Develop technologies that reduce the cost of recycling of biomass within farms.</p> <p>Recognize and support farmers’ rights and autonomy on traditional, local, indigenous seeds and breeds.</p> <p>Standards to promote animal health and welfare.</p>	<p>Mexico 2020 ruling to phase out of glyphosates over the 2021-24 period.</p> <p>EU Farm to Fork strategy aims to cut by 50% use of chemical pesticides by 2030.</p> <p>EU Biodiversity Strategy to 2030 calls for 25% of agricultural land to be under organic farming.</p> <p>Nicaragua Technical Mandatory Standard establishes institutions and programs to assist farmers with AE.</p> <p>Indonesia Law 22 of 2019 sets environmental goals for agriculture and promotes diversification.</p> <p>Netherlands Animal Act 2011 provides rules for treatment of farm animals</p>
<p>Natural resource management</p>	<p>Develop programs that support the improvement of soil health and (agro) biodiversity in public programs</p> <p>Improve security of tenure of land and trees for smallholder farmers</p> <p>Increase incentives (cross-compliance programs) for farmers to generate ecosystem services from farming</p>	<p>EU Biodiversity Strategy to 2030.</p> <p>National Agroforestry Policy of India 2014 – recognizes agroforestry as a legitimate farming system.</p> <p>US Transition Incentive Program encourages expiring Conservation Reserve Program farmers to make long term leases to continue conservation methods</p>

Market and Food Environment Oriented Policies

Direct Market Participation	<p>Procurement of foods for public institutions that include healthy, locally sourced foods.</p> <p>Food price controls – remove biases that favor the consumption of staple foods.</p> <p>Embed negative and positive externalities from agriculture/food systems into pricing schemes.</p>	<p>School feeding in Rome (Tutto per Qualit)</p> <p>Brazil’s policy on acquisition of Family Farm Foodstuff sets for public institutions to buy from family farms using AE practices.</p>
Regulation of markets / actors	<p>Establish food safety regulations.</p> <p>Create standards and labelling throughout the value chain of food contents, sources and farming practice to align with environmental, nutrition or social values.</p>	<p>Chile’s Law of Food Labelling and Advertizing (2016) -- requires labels, rules on advertising of non-nutritious foods and sets maximum levels of calories, sugars, fats...</p>
Catalyzing new markets	<p>Develop markets for: agroecology produced outputs, organic nutrient inputs, ecosystem services</p> <p>Create technology hubs to foster innovation and facilitate the adoption and monitoring of agroecological practices and principles.</p>	<p>New Zealand Climate Change Response bill (Emissions trading reform) 2019 will begin pricing emissions including from fertilizer use by 2025.</p>

Effectiveness of Policy Measures

The examples provided can also be grouped into the following types of measures:

- Persuasion/sensitization (e.g. through information campaigns)
- Incentivizing behavioral change (e.g. through taxes, subsidies)
- Command and control (e.g. through regulations)

Prior studies on the effectiveness of policies on environmental outcomes find that behavioral change and outcomes are generally more affected through command and control, though ability to monitor and enforce rules are challenging.

However, cause-effect studies relating policies to adoption of agroecology principles and consequent impacts are a major gap

Implementation and coherence

- Agroecology as a set of principles guiding policymaking
 - Rather than ‘the policy for agroecology’, agroecology ‘embedded in all policies’
 - Institutional flexibility to adapt instruments to each social and ecological context
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- **How to assure the needed coherence among different policies and categories of policies?**
 - Intra-state integrated horizontal and vertical coordination
 - Social participation and multi-stakeholders governance
 - Central role of “street-level bureaucrats” implementing flexible policies at the territorial level

Analysis: We must go beyond the formal aspects to understand how the actors who implement the policies translate the initial objectives and implement the instruments.



Concluding thoughts

As a 'set of principles', agroecology offers different routes of transitions to sustainable and healthy agri-food systems.

Until now only a few countries have made the move to a bold, broad and orchestrated set of policy reforms resulting in specific and significant commitments to enable agroecological transition.

However, some countries have put in place significant policy measures in support of such transitions, that address directly or indirectly one or more of the principles.

There is much we know about the potential of these policies, but there is also much to find out in terms of effectiveness of policies...

...and not only in countries and territories where agroecology is seen as an alternative to industrial agri-food systems but also in those contexts where changing from these systems is not the main issue.

