

SfL Initial Input on CFS Policy Recommendations on Agroecology and other Innovative Approaches for sustainable agriculture and food systems that enhance food security and nutrition.

May 26, 2020 contribution:

Just wanted to get this short note off to you before tomorrow's CFS call on agroecology and other innovations. I think what I am most uncomfortable with is the way the authors reinforce the perception of a dichotomous relationship between agroecology and all other innovations, when in fact they are one in the same- innovative. If the pandemic has showed us nothing else, it is that we need all kinds of innovations and diversity of productions systems and practices in order to improve resilience and prepare for the next global challenge whatever it may be. Clinging to the HLPE report/evidence base that seeks to position agroecology as the new "preferred approach" for sustainable food systems that ensure food security and nutrition is not in alignment with today's reality of a global health and food systems calamity. The original change to the HLPE to write a report on Agroecology and other Innovative Approaches reinforced the false choice that one system is better than others. We know this is not true and COVID, locusts, drought, floods, abnormal temperature norms require an "all tools in the toolbox" approach to managing land that recognizes a) the tremendous diversity of agricultural landscapes and ecosystems; and b) enables producers to utilize the systems and practices that best support their own unique situations and circumstances.

SfL does not support clustering innovative approaches to sustainable food systems into two categories- (i) sustainable intensification of production systems and related land approaches and (ii) agroecological and related approaches. Why reinforce a false dichotomy between these systems other than to purport that one is superior to the other. In reality we need blended and diverse approaches that meet multiple SDGs; not just food production. We cannot embrace actions to improve food security and nutrition in a silo; the land provides many other goods and services that must be food/nutrition security must be harmonized with other lands use goals.

The HLPE report's findings that agroecological and related approaches are more focused on transforming food systems, while sustainable intensification and related approaches are more focused on input use efficiency is another straw man argument. Sustainable intensification can and must embrace and incorporate agroecological systems and practices. Equally important, sustainable intensification is not just limited to food production. We use the term to cover all of the goods and services that flow from well managed ag landscapes—i.e. food AND ecosystem services. Again we need both.

Let's keep pressing CFS to abandon this flawed, false choice dichotomy and stick with "proven , pragmatic and science based approaches and techniques" of which agroecological is one of many.