



**Ministry of Agriculture &
Livestock Development**



Concept Note

THE 2ND EASTERN AFRICA AGROECOLOGY CONFERENCE

**Harnessing the Potential of Agroecology in Transforming and Sustaining
Resilient Agri-Food Systems**

Organized by

**Biovision Africa Trust, Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock
Development, Kenya and Agroecology Promotion Programme
Partners**

October 2024

Date:

25th – 28th March 2025

Venue:

Safari Park Hotel

Nairobi, Kenya



1. Introduction

Global challenges including biodiversity loss, food insecurity, perpetual poverty, deteriorating health, disease and pest resistance, deforestation, reduction in water quality, exacerbated by climate change effects continue to be felt with phenomenal consequences, and especially in Africa. The consequences go beyond imaginations when shocks, such as the recent COVID-19 weigh in. This is despite investments by governments, development partners and multinational corporations in agriculture based on industrial optimization and economic short-term gains.

As commonly noted by 2050, sub-Saharan Africa's population is projected to exceed 2.1 billion, a 94 per cent increase. Such trend will create millions of additional food-insecure people over the next few decades¹. FAO estimates that the number of undernourished people globally could range from 7 ½ million to 13 million people in the next several years with the Ukraine-Russia war having complicated the already hurting challenges.

Solutions to the aforementioned challenges don't require short-term and quick fixes, but long-term solutions based on interconnectedness of the systems of production and consumption. There is growing consensus that Ecological Organic Agriculture (EOA) and Agroecology provide alternative solutions consistent with sustainable development goals. The systems have potential for achieving stable food systems creating a balance between small-scale food production and consumption in general. Thus, focusing food and agricultural policies on agroecology in response to the current crises can transform current production and consumption while addressing global challenges.

To develop trust in agroecology as basis for transitioning food systems towards food security, nutrition and safety, employment and resilience to climate change, evidence should be assembled and shared. Based on evidence of successful interventions around the world, the Eastern Africa conference organizers believe that agroecology and ecological organic production systems hold the future of the region's food systems.

2. The Second Eastern Africa Agroecology Conference

This conference aims to motivate key stakeholders to invest in interventions that transform current unsustainable food systems by transitioning towards more environmentally friendly solutions with long-term vision and planning.

The conference will be held in Nairobi, Kenya, from 25th - 28th March 2023, involving sit-insessions and field excursions. The conference will be a hybrid event comprising in-person attendance and livestreaming for on-line participants.

Rationale of the Conference

1. The conference will build on the 1st Eastern Africa Agroecology titled, '*Transforming Food Systems for Responsible Production, Consumption and Green Economy in Eastern Africa with theme Strengthening Resilience and Sustainability in Food Systems for Environmental and Social-Economic Development*' held from 22-25 March 2023 in Nairobi.

¹ Institute for Economics & Peace. Ecological Threat Report 2021: Understanding Ecological Threats, Resilience and Peace, Sydney, October 2021. Available from: <http://visionofhumanity.org/resources>.

2. Builds further on the United Nations Food Systems Summit (UNFSS) to share national and regional food system transformation paths in support of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (2030 Agenda). The Summit identified five action tracks, including: ensure access to safe and nutritious food for all; shift to sustainable consumption patterns; boost nature-positive production; advance equitable livelihoods; and build resilience to vulnerabilities, shocks and stress.
3. The conference provides forum for ecosystem of organizations and initiatives to share results and experiences of how agri-food systems can contribute to healthy, equitable, efficient, resilient, and culturally diverse systems in terms of production, distribution, processing, consumption, farmer organization and markets.
4. Build case for women's and youth's role as active partners in creation of sustainable food systems.

Shared vision

Truly functioning agri-food systems widening access to sufficient and healthy food for all, in thriving economies that safeguard planetary boundaries.

Purpose of the conference

The conference provides a forum to discuss important issues including evidence-generation of agroecology impacts, scaling up agroecological transitions, digitalization in agri-food systems, investment in research and innovation, engagement of small-scale food producers including indigenous peoples, women, youth and the private sector in agri-food systems transformation.

Conference title: Harnessing the Potential of Agroecology in Transforming and Sustaining Resilient Agri-Food Systems.

Theme: Strengthening Agri-Food System Transformation for Resilience, Sustainability and Socioeconomic Development.

Conference Sub-themes

1. Pathways for enhancing production, productivity and sustainability of agri-food systems with agroecological interventions
2. Food security, nutrition, and health nexus: Soil health and farmer managed seed systems
3. Empowerment of women and youth movements in agroecology
4. Trade, markets and economy: Implications for agroecological transitions
5. Institutional and policy opportunities for unlocking potential of agroecology in transforming agri-food systems
6. Financing mechanisms for agroecological pathways and transitions

Sub-theme 1: Pathways for enhancing production, productivity and sustainability of agri-food systems with agroecological interventions

Production, productivity, and sustainability of agroecological systems depend on integrated practices and technologies. Broadly agroecology promotes food systems that conserve the environment and soil health and lead to sustainable agricultural efficiency. It is increasingly recognized that food systems in Eastern Africa, as well as Africa in general, are not sustainable; they continue to contribute to degradation and biodiversity loss. This thematic area invites presentations and discussions on successful cases agri-food systems in Eastern Africa and elsewhere for benchmarking and learning.

Sub-theme 2: Food security, nutrition, and health nexus: Soil health and farmer managed seed systems

To transform our current food systems, agroecological principles and practices should favor or mimic natural processes and biological interactions. This is key to optimizing synergies in diversified farms and supporting soil fertility improvement, crop and animal protection, and productivity. They aim to produce food by relying on ecological processes instead of relying on external inputs in ways that guarantee equity, environmental friendliness, local adaptation, and holistic approach. Presentations are invited to showcase innovative agroecological practices showing the nexus between nutrition and health how they can be adopted and scaled.

Sub-theme 3: Empowerment of women and youth movements in agroecology

Rural women are the backbone of agriculture and food security in most developing countries. Comprising [43 percent of the global agricultural labor force](#), women play a crucial role in all levels of global food production. FAO estimates that if there was equity in access to resources, women could contribute to increased agricultural yields by 20-30 percent, with the potential to reduce food insecurity for 100-150 million people globally. Presentations will be sought to show the contributions of women, their traditional knowledge, consumption patterns and household food security in agroecology and safe and healthy livelihoods.

Advancements in ICT provide opportunity for agro-ecology sector to contribute to stable and resilient food systems by addressing information failure. With about 50 percent of the world's population being youth and more in the developing countries, the future of global food security inevitably depends on extent of youth involvement. Agriculture has been feeding the world population but the ways of doing so are not sustainable as we can see from the increasing number of hungry people. Digital technologies are providing solutions and innovation is imperative. Presentations at the conference will show how innovations by the youth are unlocking the potential of agroecology in reducing poverty, bridging the rural divide, creating employment and giving access to information, technology and market opportunities

Sub-theme 4: Trade, markets and economy: Implications for agroecological transitions

The need for producing healthy products while observing planetary boundaries is rapidly growing globally. The demand for safe and organic products (and by extension agroecological) is moving from the “niche” space to mainstream markets. The total land under certified organic production worldwide is growing and has reached over 26 million ha. However, statistics on organic agriculture in Africa in general are extremely limited, illustrating the still relatively immature status of the sector, despite the potential of the sector and a long tradition of the organic movement across the continent. Presentations on this thematic area will share opportunities and challenges for promoting markets and trade based on organic agriculture and agroecology.

Sub-theme 5: Institutional and policy opportunities for unlocking potential of agroecology in transforming agri-food systems

Policies and supporting institutions are critical drivers to agro- ecological transformation. Areas such as farmer managed seed systems, organic product identification and marketing, financing and investment environments, research into agroecological systems require policy and institutional grounding. The policies must be based on reliable, timely and locally relevant data and evidence on the multidimensional performance of agroecology sector and simultaneously look at interconnected objectives for the whole food systems. Presentations will be sought to show efforts of bringing together political decision-makers, and other actors involved in the development of policies, strategies and programmes related to food systems and how they contribute to food security and nutrition and better environments.

Sub-theme 6: Financing mechanisms for agroecological pathways and transitions

Agroecological transformations require changes in what is produced and how it is produced, processed, transported, and consumed. Since food systems need to be transformed to address the multiple crises facing modern industrial agriculture such as biodiversity loss, poor nutrition, food insecurity, and climate change, the current financial architecture also needs to be re-designed to support transitions towards agroecological transformation. Presentations under this sub-theme will show innovative research and initiatives that encourage a switch to agroecological systems, business models that promote agroecological inputs and value chains, public-private and other types of partnerships, inclusive financial services and products, financial technology solutions, and resource mobilization tools and strategies that hasten the redesign of agroecosystems and trigger food systems change.

Scope

- Thematic scope: Food system transformation (including agriculture, nutrition, environment, markets, consumption) through agroecology
- Geographic scope: Eastern Africa countries

Expected outcomes

1. **Embraced overall food system transformation agenda** in Eastern Africa in line with agroecological principles and practices.
2. **Connected and strengthened ecosystem of organizations and initiatives** working towards food system transformation based on agroecology.
3. **Advanced strategies and joint initiatives** on key levers for food system transformation (knowledge generation & dissemination, policy reform, market systems development, investments - tbc).
4. **Enhanced support and implementation** of agroecology-oriented policies from government institutions and other key stakeholders in the region.

Expected outputs

1. Guiding principles and recommendations for food system transformation in Eastern Africa formulated and communicated.
2. Successful examples and initiatives of agroecology works showcased and amplified.
3. Stakeholders informed on key initiatives related to food system transformation in Eastern Africa and synergies.
4. Key challenges occasioned by rapid changes and their impact on people, crops and the environment, and possible mitigation measures identified.
5. Opportunities for strengthening agroecology agenda and practice identified.
6. Awareness about the potential of agroecology for sustainable production, consumption and contribution to green economy enhanced.
7. Action plans towards enhancing agroecology in the region created.
8. Conference report, conference resolutions, policy brief (or conference journal).

Target groups

The Conference will bring together over 600 participants and 30 exhibitors from various countries with interest in the growth and development of the agroecological sector. Specifically, the participants will include:

- Policy makers and governments, representatives from various related line Ministries (agriculture, health, environment, water, etc.) at national and regional levels
- Organizations and initiatives working towards food systems transformation
- Farmers and farmer organizations
- Agroecology practitioners and civil society organizations

- Private sector in organic industry
- Consumer associations
- Strategic partners and donor agencies
- Members from academia and research institutions
- Institutional and individual donors
- Local, national, regional and international media

Format

- Online preparatory phase (webinars)
- Main conference (3 days, hybrid), consisting of:
 - Plenary sessions on food system transformation topics, with inspiring keynote presentations and panel discussions involving key stakeholders.
 - Break-out sessions along conference tracks with interactive formats (short presentations, panel discussions, fish-bowl discussions, World Cafés).
- Excursions to understand how agroecology works along the value chain (research, farming, inputs, processing, retail...)

3. Program Structure

Timing	Arrivals to Nairobi Kenya 24 th March 2024	Day 1: Conference 25 th March 2024	Day 2: Conference 26 th March 2024	Day:3 Conference 27 th March 2024	Day 4: Field Visits 28 th March 2024
Morning (9:00-12:30)	Arrivals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Registrations ✓ Opening speeches ✓ Keynotes ✓ Exhibition visit by Chief Guest and delegates 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Plenary ✓ Breakout sessions (tracks): 2 sessions with coffee break in-between ✓ Exhibition visit 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Plenary ✓ Breakout sessions (tracks): 2 sessions with coffee break in-between ✓ Exhibition visit 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Field Excursions on Farms showcasing Agroecology practices
Lunch		Lunch	Lunch	Lunch	
Afternoon (14:00-17:30)		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Breakout sessions (tracks): 2 sessions with coffee break in-between 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Breakout sessions (tracks): 2 sessions with coffee break in-between 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Call to action ✓ Closing Ceremony (by 16:30h) 	
Dinner		Gala dinner			

4. Conference Tracks

Six conference tracks aligned with the five themes will guide the conference. The tracks will be coordinated/led by organizations that have experience and demonstrated the ability to organize activities around such tracks.

- Agroecological systems & scale up strategies
- Food security, nutrition, and health nexus
- Women and youth empowerment in agroecology
- Market development & trade
- Policy reforms & agroecology investments
- Financing for impact and scale

5. Conference Organization

- Lead organization: Biovision Africa Trust (BvAT)
- Conference Organizing Committee (COC) consisting of key partners: Responsible for overall planning of the conference
- Four Conference Sub-Committees
 - Themes and Abstracts
 - Budget and Fundraising
 - Communication and Publicity
 - Logistics and Field Excursions
- Core Organizing Team (BvAT, local co-host, event organizer): Organizing the conference as per guidance from the COC, coordinating all activities, ensuring logistics, shaping the plenary sessions and accompanying program (exhibition, gala dinner, excursions), managing budgets.
- Track/Thematic leads (2 organizations per track): Shaping breakout sessions content

6. Collaborating partners

- Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock Development, Kenya
- Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock, Uganda, Tanzania, Rwanda, Ethiopia and Burundi
- African Union (AU)
- East Africa Community (EAC)
- Agroecology Promotion Programme partners: Agroecology Coalition, Afronet, Agroecology Fund, Pelum Kenya, Pelum Association, Shona
- ISFAA, ICRAF-CIFOR TPP
- AFSA
- Other relevant ministries of East African countries
- FAO, UNEP
- Development partners and Donors

7. Budget

The estimated budget for this conference will be USD 400,000 (Details in a separate document).

The funds to be raised through strategy by budget and fundraising committee including:

- Development partner contributions, donations
- Participant registrations, exhibitions
- Project contributions
- Philanthropists
- In-kind contributions