



THE AGROECOLOGY PROJECT IN FRANCE

France is committed to changing production models in order to combine economic, social and environment high performance: this is the Agroecology Project. An ambitious public policy that involves all partners in the sector.





The initial diagnosis

The implementation of the agroecology project flows from a shared observation of fact: **the issues facing agriculture are, at one and the same time, economic, environmental and social in nature**, and they cannot be addressed separately.

Launched in 2012, **the agroecology project** focuses on an ambitious goal for French farming: **a transition to high-performance production systems that cover every aspect**, but more specifically the economic and environmental dimensions. Its success requires **commitment from all involved in the sector**.



Agroecology is possible!

The experience of the farmers who have pioneered agroecology shows us that it is possible for farms to combine economic, environmental and social high performance. Application of agroecology entails holistic consideration of each farm in order to take account of every aspect of its operation and the balances within its agro-ecosystem.



Agroecology is possible both in France and elsewhere in the world because it is based on the specific features of each local region and efforts to define local solutions. **The agroecology project is in this way aimed at producing differently on the basis of a rethink of our systems of production. It also means a change in mindset not only on the part of the authorities but also society generally in its attitudes to farming.**

The objective of the French project is **to roll out agroecology from a small number of ground-breaking pioneers to commitment by a majority of French farmers.**

THE MAIN DRIVERS OF AGROECOLOGY

» **Engaging in holistic and systematic consideration** of each holding, with a view not to applying a readymade recipe but to finding the right solutions to be developed in each context..

» **Making use of positive biological interactions in farming systems:** preservation of factors conducive to biodiversity (e.g. hedges, grass strips), natural regulatory mechanisms between populations and pests, a search for the right crops and rotations, reinforcement of the effects of previous crop choices, and so on.

» **Supporting the autonomy and resilience of farms** by promoting the integrity of bio-geochemical cycles (water, nitrogen, etc.): working on crop rotation and cover between crops, reducing dependence on inputs, improving soil fertility, developing livestock/crop synergies, management of organic effluents, and much else.



THE AGROECOLOGY PROJECT

The Agroecology Project stems from a determined policy decision taken by France's Minister of Agriculture, Stéphane Le Foll. It aims to provide our agriculture with an inspirational, ambitious focus for the future. Implementation of the project is based on collective governance via a steering committee made up of the principal actors in the farming industry in order to share this vision and support the transition with a series of practical actions (cf. the general action plan below). Implementation of the project entails changes in our core agricultural policies (notably an overhaul of support programmes) in order to facilitate commitment to agroecology and assist farmers in making the transition.



SOME EXAMPLES OF AGROECOLOGY PROJECT ACTIONS

- ▶ **Agricultural training:** more effective inclusion of agroecology-related knowledge and teaching in educational programmes for students and the setting up of a teacher-training programme.
- ▶ **Investment subsidies:** Investment subsidies, for example, are being geared to projects for agroecological change on farms. Coupled support is also being applied in order to support production of plant proteins.
- ▶ **Involvement of research and research & development organisations:** continuation and stepping up of research and experimentation with a view to disseminating agronomic and organisational innovations to support the changes in systems and practices on the ground (with particular emphasis on use of the European Innovation Partnership – EIP – a new CAP measure for 2014–2020).
- ▶ **Setting up economic and environmental interest groupings (EEIGs):** this new tool, created by the Future of Agriculture, Food, and Forestry Act passed in October 2014, enables government to give recognition to the commitment of groups of farmers, and potentially others in the local region, to changes in their farming methods with a view to economic, environmental and social considerations.
- ▶ **Creation of an agroecology diagnostic tool:** to encourage farmers to think about their methods and possible changes to their systems. This tool allows individual farmers to assess their methods and performance and compare them with other farmers. It has been made available free of charge for voluntary application from September 2015 at www.dagagroeco.org.
- ▶ **Changes in seed evaluation:** the aim here is to emphasise the environmental dimension of the criteria applied in assessing the performance of different varieties.
- ▶ **An overhaul of public support programmes:** Public support for agriculture is gradually being reviewed with a view to providing greater incentives to go down the agroecology road.
- ▶ **Regular project monitoring and evaluation:** the results and impacts of the action plan are presented in an annual report posted on the website of the French ministry with responsibility for agriculture. The progress achieved can be evaluated by looking at the indicators.

The French Agroecology Project

A novel response to issues encountered in every country around the world

- ▶ **The challenge of food and nutritional security** - feeding over nine billion people by 2050 with high-quality, safe and healthy products.
- ▶ **The environmental challenge** - conserving and using natural resources effectively and responding to the issues of climate change.
- ▶ **The social challenge** - combating poverty in the agricultural world and the rural exodus; increasing the resilience of production systems in coping with unforeseen events.

The various forms of agriculture need to maintain and even increase their productivity while at the same time conserving natural resources. Environmental considerations must thus become a factor in competitiveness. Agroecology is part of the response to the challenges facing agriculture.

Commitment by international actors

The FAO, following its organisation of a symposium on 18-19 September 2014 under the heading “*Agroecology for Food and Nutritional Security*”, launched a three-year programme of work and discussion devoted to agroecology. It includes the holding of regional workshops and addressing three mutually complementary aspects: scientific fact, farming methods and public policy.



» AGROECOLOGY AND COP21

Agriculture can be part of the response to climate change by adopting agroecology. France sent this message during COP21 underlining the advantages of an innovative farming protective of the environment.

In particular, France launched the initiative “**4 per 1000 : Soils for Food Security and Climate**”, supported by more than 100 international partners. This initiative has been selected in the Lima – Paris action agenda.



4 PER 1000 SOILS FOR FOOD SECURITY AND CLIMATE

The aim of this initiative is to foster changes in agricultural systems to increase organic matter content and carbon sequestration in soils using appropriate agricultural practices. Soils richer in organic matter are more fertile and more productive, are better able to resist erosion and climate disruption and provide a contribution to climate change mitigation by sequestering substantial quantities of carbon.