



**Statement of The Latin American Scientific Society of Agroecology (SOCLA)
regarding FAO's 2nd International Symposium on Agroecology: scaling up
agroecology to contribute to the Sustainable development Goals.**

1. SOCLA representatives attended FAO's 2nd International Symposium on "Agroecology: scaling up agroecology to contribute to the Sustainable Development Goals" and throughout various sessions contributed to the debate with concrete statements and recommendations. In general SOCLA welcomes FAO's agroecology initiative and hopes to contribute to it with its vast experience and academic capital, as long as we all share the same vision of agroecology, true to its origins, identity and transformative goals.
2. Whatever levels of funding from multilateral agencies, foundations, donors and governments may become available to support FAO's scaling up agroecological initiative, these should not be channeled through the international conventional organizations, who after promoting the Green Revolution are now re-branding themselves as "promoters of agroecology " to capture whatever funding is available and thus promote distorted versions of agroecology such as Climate Smart Agriculture, Sustainable Intensification, Evergreen Agriculture, etc., all strategies aimed at easing the sustainability crisis of industrial food production, without challenging the structure of monocultures and associated agrochemical and transgenic technologies. The declaration by the Global Forum on Agricultural Research (GFAR-representing a significant sector of the international and national research apparatus) circulated at the Symposium was very clear in this regard: "*GFAR does not consider agroecology as a radical alternative to green revolution, nor as a parallel pathway that cannot coexist with agribusiness and industrial agriculture*". Clearly since the first FAO Symposium in 2014, some mainstream organizations still reduce agroecology to a set of low input techniques to be adopted alongside biotechnological options to fine-tune and mitigate the destructive aspects of industrialized food production.
3. Civil society representatives present at the Symposium (including peasant organizations, social rural movements, progressive NGOs and academics) do not consider agroecology to be a tool for the industrial food production model;

on the contrary they consider it as the essential alternative to that model. The civil society declaration clearly stated that transitioning to an agriculture based on agroecological principles, run by small farmers and peasants (especially by women and youth) is the only path forward to provide rural families with significant social, economic and environmental benefits, while feeding the world equitably and sustainably. This was emphasized by Mariam Sow, peasant woman from Senegal when she said “*Agroecology is a form of life for our people*”.

4. Agroecology, as we define it, is not based on recipes, but on solid ecological and social principles applied in a different way to each reality expressed through multiple biodiverse designs adapted to local socio-cultural and biophysical settings. Agroecologically based farming systems do not depend on external, off-farm inputs, thus enhancing farmer’s autonomy. The productive potential of biodiverse, productive and climate change resilient farming systems, is realized and further disseminated by thousands of farmers via collective social action and grassroots horizontal pedagogical mechanisms. By exchanging innovations among themselves, peasants have already made dramatic strides in food production relative to the conventional sector, while preserving agrobiodiversity and significantly reducing its ecological footprint. There are many examples of whole rural communities engaged on agroecological transition processes at the territorial level, involving the restoration of landscapes with biodiversity and resource conservation schemes and widespread use of agroecological practices, which comprise the basis of territory-linked embedded food systems.
5. For SOCLA, agroecology is a transformative science and movement that is explicitly committed to a more just and sustainable future by reshaping power relations from farm to table. We support the ever-increasing diversity of actors (peasants’ organizations, progressive academics, NGO people, consumers and environmentalists) who are actively forming food justice movements under the banner of food sovereignty. During the Symposium women farmers and civil society representatives repeatedly called for a fundamentally different vision of food and the way how we produce, distribute and consume it, thus contributing to the creation of equitable food systems that democratically break away from dominant market logics, by creating solidarious alliances between producers and consumers.
6. Although many participants offered perspectives for the scaling up of agroecology, there are pathways for the amplification of agroecology that were not sufficiently highlighted during the symposium and that merit further consideration:
 - a. Throughout the world hundreds of traditional agricultural systems have stood the test of time and offer promising models of sustainability and resiliency as they promote biodiversity, thrive without agrochemicals, and sustain year-round yields in the midst of ecological marginality and climate change. Revival

of these ancient systems and technologies can spearhead a quest for affordable, productive and ecologically sound technologies that enhance small farm productivity while conserving natural resources and biodiversity. As mentioned by the Ministers of China, Iran and Hungary it is important that FAO re-invigorates its program “ Globally Ingenious Agricultural Heritage Systems” (GIAHS) linking it to the agroecology scaling up initiative.

- b. In most countries there are hundreds of “successful farmers” who designed and manage diversified farms that serve as “agroecological lighthouses” from which agroecological principles radiate out to the community and farmers from other regions, helping them to build the basis of an agricultural strategy that promotes efficiency, diversity, synergy, and resiliency. As resources become available, these successful agroecological farmer innovations must be given greater visibility as lighthouses, thus providing living testimonies on how to design and manage farms based on agroecological principles.
 - c. Despite the overall importance given to the development of public policies in support of agroecology at the symposium, it is important to caution that at times certain public policies (i.e. credits) can create dependencies that weaken farmers’ adoption of agroecology. Many countries have already conducive public frameworks but the gap between what the law says and what is being implemented at the field level is enormous. Lack of political will, lack of trained government researchers and extensionists on agroecology, and lack of agroecology curricula within Universities, are some of the factors that contribute to the gap. FAO can help governments close these gaps, especially if encouraging collaborative partnerships with peasant organizations such as La Via Campesina and scientific agroecology societies such as SOCLA and others emerging in other regions of the world.
7. Although we celebrate FAO’s embracing of agroecology, it is important to remind ourselves that the reason that more than 700 participants were discussing Agroecology at FAO’s 2nd Symposium on Agroecology, is precisely because of (a) the persistence of millions of peasant and indigenous farmers that feed the world with their diversified farming systems (b) the pioneering work of many NGOs and civil society organizations around the world that have denounced the impacts of industrial farming and searched for alternatives and (c) the efforts of dozens of researchers and scientists many times working at the fringes of academia, ignored and criticized by international and national research institutions, helped establish the ecological and social foundations of agroecology. The origins, identity and legacy of agroecology must be recognized, respected and preserved by FAO if we are all to truly collaborate in scaling-up agroecology.