ANNUAL MEMBERS FORUM MEETING 2025

Agroecology TPP

Agroecology and Safe Food System Transitions

THE PRACTICE OF AGROECOLOGY IN AFRICA

LESSONS LEARNED IN MAINSTREAMING AGROECOLOGY IN AFRICA

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Presentation outline

1. Introduction
2. Presentation of PAFO
3. Practice of Agroecology in Africa
4. Benefits and Challenges of Agroecological Practices in Africa
5. Lessons Learned in the Mainstreaming Agroecology in Africa.
6. Concluding remarks

1. Presentation of PAFO

1. Brief background

Vision: A vibrant, prosperous and sustainable African agriculture that ensures food security and sovereignty, including socio-economic and cultural development.

Mission: Representing the interests of African farmers and promoting the development of African agriculture.

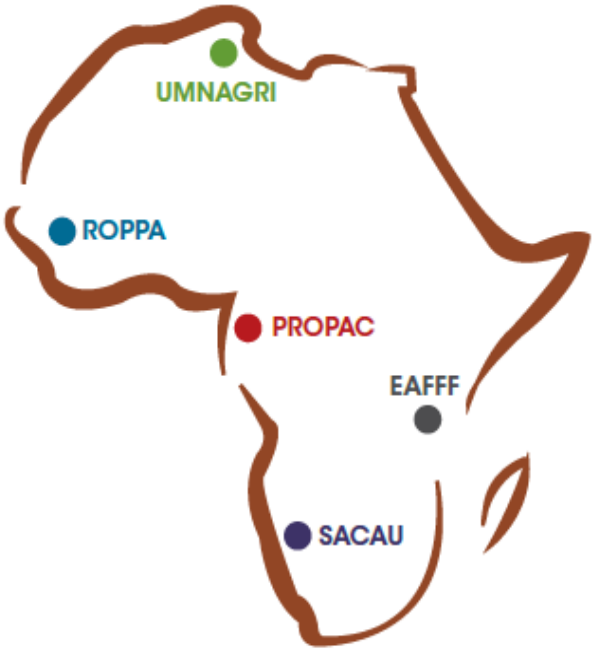
The Pan-African Farmers' Organization (PAFO) is a continental organization with a membership base composed of Regional Farmer's Networks. Its Constitutive Assembly was held under the sponsorship of the African Union in Lilongwe, Malawi, from October 27 to 29, 2010. PAFO is recognized as the representative body of African farmers' organizations at the highest continental level. It is the voice of African Farmers representing over 80 million farmers in five regional networks and 73 national farmers organisations in 50 African countries.

1. Presentation of PAFO (Contd)

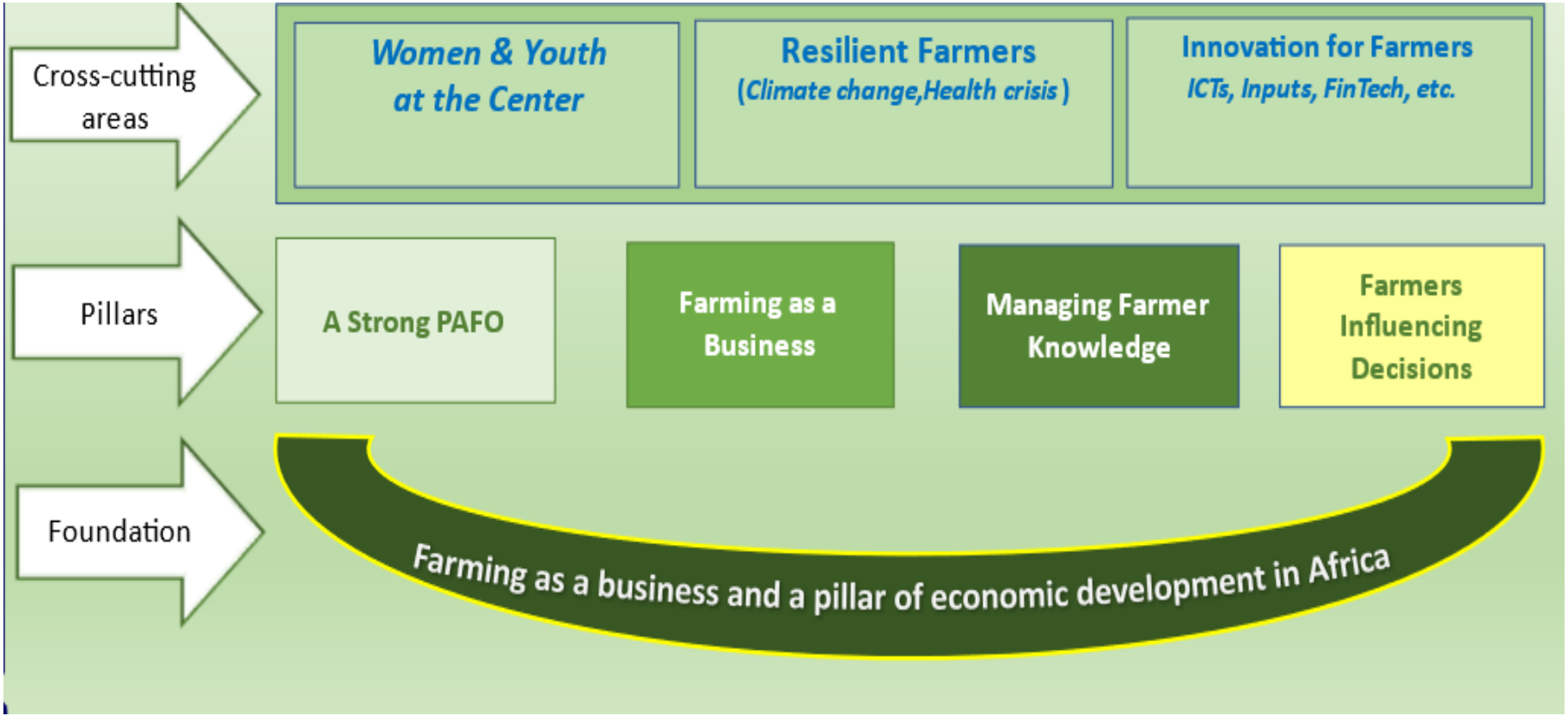
2. Membership

The members of PAFO are:

- Eastern African Farmers Federation (EAFF)
- Regional Platform of Farmers' Organizations of Central Africa (PROPAC)
- Network of farmers 'and producers' organizations in West Africa (ROPPA)
- Southern African Confederation of Agricultural Unions (SACAU)
- Maghrebian and North African Union of Farmers (UMNAGRI)



Strategic Focus of PAFO



2. Agroecological Practices in Africa

a) Agroforestry: Combining trees with crops and livestock to improve soil fertility and provide shade. Example: In the Sahel, farmers practice "Farmer-Managed Natural Regeneration (FMNR)", restoring degraded lands by protecting and pruning native trees.

b) Intercropping and Crop Rotation: Multiple crops together (e.g., maize with beans or millet with groundnuts) to improve soil nutrients and reduce pests. Example: In East Africa, maize-bean intercropping is common for nitrogen fixation.

c) **Organic Soil Management**: Using compost, manure, and biofertilizers instead of synthetic fertilizers. Example: In Ethiopia, farmers use traditional composting (locally called "Berkena") to enrich soils.

d) **Integrated Pest Management (IPM)**: Using biological pest control methods, such as companion planting and natural predators, to reduce reliance on chemical pesticides. Example: Neem tree extracts are widely used as organic pesticides in West Africa.

2. Agroecological Practices in Africa (contd)

e) **Conservation Agriculture**: Practices like minimal tillage, crop cover, and crop rotation to prevent soil erosion and enhance moisture retention. Example: In Zambia and Zimbabwe, conservation farming techniques are promoted to combat drought.

f) **Community Seed Banks & Indigenous Seed Preservation**: Promoting the use of local, climate-resilient seeds instead of genetically modified varieties. Example: Mali's seed banks preserve traditional millet, sorghum, and cowpea varieties.

3. Benefits and Challenges of Agroecological Practices in Africa

Benefits

Increased Food Security: Enhances smallholder farmers' productivity without dependency on expensive external inputs.

Climate Resilience: Reduces vulnerability to droughts and floods by improving soil and water conservation.

Economic Empowerment: Reduces costs for farmers by eliminating dependency on chemical fertilizers and pesticides.

Environmental Protection: Supports biodiversity, regenerates soils, and reduces greenhouse gas emissions.

Challenges:

Policy Barriers: Many African governments still favor industrial agriculture and subsidize chemical inputs.

Limited Market Access: Agroecological farmers struggle to find markets for organic produce.

Knowledge Gaps: Lack of training and extension services to support the transition.

Corporate Influence: Agribusiness lobbies push for GMOs and synthetic fertilizers, sidelining agroecology.

4. Lessons learned in Mainstreaming Agroecology in Africa.

Mainstreaming agroecology in Africa has provided several important lessons, both from successes and challenges. These lessons can guide policymakers, researchers, and practitioners in advancing agroecological transitions. Here are some key takeaways:

1. **Policy and Institutional Support Are Crucial**: Governments that integrate agroecology into national policies, such as Senegal and Uganda, see greater adoption. Policy inconsistencies and a lack of coordination among agricultural, environmental, and trade sectors slow progress. Regional and continental frameworks (e.g., the African Union's Ecological Organic Agriculture Initiative) help drive change.

2. **Farmer-Led Innovations and Traditional Knowledge Matter**: Agroecology thrives when farmers are central to decision-making, co-creating knowledge with researchers. Indigenous practices, such as intercropping and agroforestry, have proven highly effective.

4. Lessons learned in Mainstreaming Agroecology in Africa (contd)

3. **Capacity Building and Education Are Key**: Training farmers, extension workers, and policymakers enhances adoption. Agroecology should be integrated into school curricula and agricultural universities.

4. **Market Access and Value Chains Need Strengthening**: Farmers need fair access to markets for agroecological products. Certification and labeling (e.g., Participatory Guarantee Systems) improve consumer trust. Shortening value chains through local food networks supports sustainability.

5. **Financial and Technical Support Is Limited but Necessary**: Many agroecological farmers struggle with access to credit, insurance, and subsidies. Investments should prioritize smallholder farmers rather than large agribusinesses.

6. **Climate Resilience and Environmental Benefits Are Evident**: Agroecology enhances soil fertility, biodiversity, and water retention. Climate-smart practices, such as agroforestry, help mitigate climate change effects.

4. Lessons learned in Mainstreaming Agroecology in Africa (contd)

7. **Resistance from Commercial Agriculture Lobbies is a Barrier**: Large agribusinesses promote input-heavy, monoculture farming, resisting policy shifts. Advocacy and public awareness campaigns are needed to counter corporate influence.

8. **Regional and International Cooperation Accelerates Progress**: Cross-country knowledge sharing through farmers organisations networks is valuable. Partnerships with international organizations help mobilize resources.

Agroecology Advocacy and Policies in Africa

Farmers organisations in partnership with the Alliance for Food Sovereignty in Africa (AFSA): Advocates for agroecology across the continent.

The Ecological Organic Agriculture Initiative (EOA-I): An African Union-led program promoting organic farming.

Country-Level Strategies: Senegal, Uganda, and Mali have integrated agroecology into national policies.

Concluding Remarks

Agroecology is increasingly recognized in Africa as a sustainable approach to farming that enhances biodiversity, improves soil health, and strengthens food sovereignty. Rooted in traditional African farming systems, agroecology integrates ecological principles with local knowledge to create resilient agricultural landscapes.

Agroecology offers Africa a pathway toward a more sustainable and resilient food system. Scaling up agroecological practices requires supportive policies, farmer-led research, investment in agroecological markets, and stronger advocacy that promotes the adoption of agroecological practices. By embracing agroecology, Africa can secure food sovereignty while protecting the environment for future generations.

In conclusion, mainstreaming agroecology in Africa requires a holistic approach—aligning policies, empowering farmers, securing markets, and addressing financial barriers. A shift in mindset from short-term productivity to long-term sustainability is essential.

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