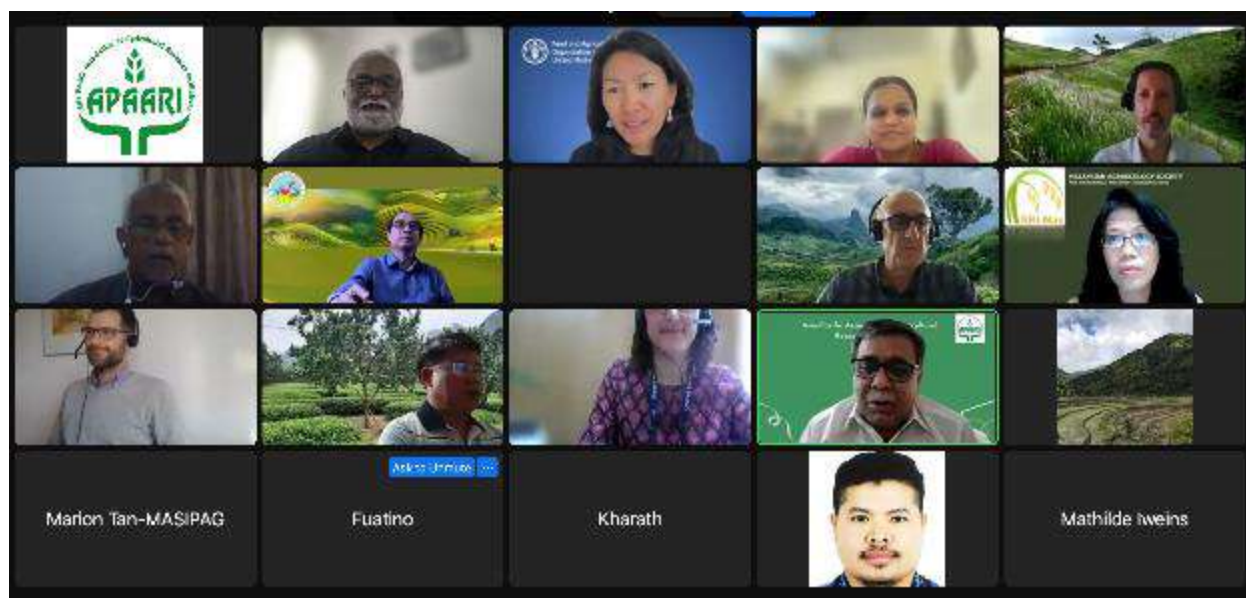


## Report

### Working Group on Agroecology (10 June 2022)

#### Background

As part of the Joint Action Plan under the FAO's Tropical Agriculture Platform-Agricultural Innovation Systems Project, the Asia Pacific Island Rural Advisory Services Network (APIRAS) and the Asia Pacific Association of Agricultural Research Institutions (APAARI) in close collaboration with the Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations (FAO) organized the first meeting of the Working Group on Agroecology on 10<sup>th</sup> June 2022. The meeting focused on the various challenges in mainstreaming agroecology among research and extension agencies in Asia-Pacific and how actors in Research, Extension and Education Systems could support mainstreaming agroecology. 25 members familiar with the development and promotion of agroecology especially from the research, extension, civil society organizations, academia, Government and donor community from the Asia-Pacific region participated in the meeting.



#### Sessions

The meeting started with a brief presentation by Pierre Ferrand, Agricultural Officer (Agroecology), FAO Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific, and co-facilitator of the Working Group who gave the rationale for organizing this group. He mentioned that this Working Group aims to build upon the recent events

organized at sub regional and regional level<sup>1</sup>, which have highlighted the growing interest across the region for transforming food systems through Agroecology. While these events have highlighted the challenges in mainstreaming agroecology, there is very little discussion on how to strengthen the contribution of Research, Extension and Education in mainstreaming agroecology. He emphasized on the importance to develop counter narratives and actionable recommendations by the Working Group members to strengthen advocacy, resource mobilization and capacity development of varied stakeholders and the need for continuous interactions among Working Group Members.

This was followed by a presentation from Rasheed Sulaiman V, Director, Centre for Research on Innovation and Science Policy and Focal Point APIRAS. He presented the summary of key challenges in mainstreaming agroecology through existing research, extension and education systems identified by the Working Group Members prior to the meeting. The key challenges were related to Policy (Perception, Policy and Implementation), Awareness (lack of awareness on the merits of agroecology at several levels), Financing (especially for Research and Extension for Agroecology) and Curricula (lack of relevant content on agroecology within agricultural universities and extension training centres).

After these two presentations, participants were divided into three groups to identify ways through which actors in Research, Extension and Education Systems could support mainstreaming agroecology. Pierre Ferrand, Rasheed Sulaiman V, Sasireka Rajendran (Project Manager, APAARI, Delgermaa Chuluunbaatar (Agricultural Research Officer, FAO) and Nimisha Mittal (Lead Researcher, CRISP) moderated the group discussions. Each group presented their recommendations in the plenary. The main recommendations were as follows:

## Recommendations

### Research

1. Advocate for more funding for Research on Agroecology:  
Conduct a study on the pattern of current investments in agricultural research in Asia Pacific (similar to the [Biovision study in Africa](#)) to generate evidence on the limited funding support to agroecology and use such evidence on the funding gap to advocate for enhanced funding for agroecology
2. Encourage/Support more social science investigations on the contribution and performance of agroecology on multiple dimensions related to food systems transformation
3. Undertake more case studies and documentation of good practices in agroecology
4. Promote new metrics beyond productivity enhancement that also include contribution to nutrition, rural employment, soil health, water use, adaptation to climate change etc (Eg: Tool for Agroecology Performance Evaluation (TAPE) developed by FAO).
5. Conduct long term trials to assess the performance and contribution of agroecology vis-a vis conventional farming.
6. Broaden the governance of agricultural research by including more wide stakeholders, especially farmer organizations in priority setting and oversight. Advocate for these reforms and APAARI could take a lead on this

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<sup>1</sup> Regional workshop on [Agro-ecological and safe food transitions for green, resilient and inclusive recovery in the ASEAN region](#), November 8-9 2021; Regional Consultation on [Engaging with Academia and Research Institutions \(ARIs\) to Support Family Farmers and Food System Transformation During - and Post COVID-19 Pandemic in Asia](#), December 8-9 2021; Regional Consultation Meeting on [Promoting Healthy, Sustainable, and Inclusive Food Systems in Response to Covid-19 in South Asia](#), March 29-30 2022; [Asia Regional Dialogue on Agroecology](#), May 12 2022.

7. Undertake a mapping of actors involved, ongoing initiatives and funding opportunities in agroecology in the region
8. Develop macro-economic policies that support agroecology (as those initiated in Vietnam)
9. Form public private partnerships to promote agroecology (similar to what CASIC platform in Cambodia is fostering)
10. Strengthen capacities of researchers to appreciate the importance of indigenous knowledge, integrating farmers knowledge and scientific knowledge, support farmer experimentation and conduct problem solving research that addressed the needs and priorities of farmers.

### **Extension**

11. Recognize the role of Farmer Organizations as the key driver for transition to agroecology. Mobilize farmers as learning groups and strengthen their capacities to support transition to agroecology
12. Facilitate Learning on agroecology. Promote more trials and evaluation of agroecological approaches to convince farmers on the merits of shifting to agroecology. Approaches such as Farmer Field Schools are found to promote such learning
13. Organize training on agroecological transitions for food systems transformation instead of focusing on promoting specific technology or practices
14. Promote awareness on agroecology at all levels through wider use of social media
15. Develop a training manual on agroecology for extension and advisory staff which could then be adapted to the local context
16. Promote entrepreneurship among farmers to develop and promote bio-inputs for farming.

### **Education**

17. Integrate perspectives on sustainable food systems, environment and human health in the agricultural curricula at all levels. Need more transdisciplinary courses that promote holistic understanding of food systems in both education and training of agricultural professionals and also include these also at the school level
18. Develop specific courses on agroecology in education and training (by integrating relevant content on agroecology currently scattered across in different courses)
19. Develop short courses targeting rural youth who could emerge as agroecology champions and entrepreneurs

### **Next Steps**

The meeting concluded with a discussion facilitated by Delgermaa Chuluunbaatar on the next steps that included:

- a. Development and promotion of a Briefing Note based on these discussions for presentation in regional events on agroecology,
- b. Developing specific initiatives by APIRAS and APAARI at the regional level to take forward some of the above recommendations including development of good practices on agroecology,
- c. Identifying the upcoming opportunities / events where we could push for these recommendations.
- d. identifying ways of promoting cross learning and interaction among working group members through organizing similar meetings in the coming months and
- e. Engage with stakeholders which are not convinced about the merits of agroecology so far and broaden the support base.