

## Farmers Organisations Leading Research & Innovation on agroecology for sustainable food systems (FO-RI)

### Purpose of the project

The main goal of this action is to foster a transition towards resilient, productive and sustainable agroecological food systems through farmer-led innovation and research.

### Background

Various action-research experiences suggest that it is important to help small-scale farmers to build on their innovations by conducting joint research with scientists for effective natural resource management and climate change adaptation.

Moreover, farmer-led research builds resilience in rural communities and helps farmers to maintain and improve their livelihoods in rapidly changing contexts. Support to farmer organisations (FO) support is crucial to harness their research and innovation potential to move towards agroecological food and production systems. Sustainable agroecological practices are a key approach to addressing climate instability and growing food needs. From the FO perspective, agroecology entails the adoption of natural farming systems to increase soil fertility, manage pests and diseases, and build resilience to climate change, while reducing production cost and increasing income. FOs also see agroecology as the realisation of their rights and as an approach to peer learning and exchange of experiences.



Figure 1: Madagascar 2021. Credit to Photo: Agri-Agency FERT, Madagascar Team.

The challenge remains to bring additional benefits to farmers through relevant action-research processes led by farmers and rural communities. It is therefore necessary to:

- further strengthen the collaboration between FO's and research institutions and create spaces for reflection and mutual learning;
- strengthen the operational capacities of FO's and other stakeholders to participate in joint research;
- support innovation both at farm and value chain level with specific methods and skills;
- implement a simple but operational monitoring and evaluation system for learning and assessment of progress towards desired outcomes.

### The theory behind the change

Resilient, productive and sustainable agroecological agri-food systems secured through farmer-led innovation and research (goal) reflect the effects of three major expected developments (outcomes) of the FORI programme:

- strengthened national and regional institutional support for farmer-led action-research on innovative agroecological approaches;
- increased know-how of local farmers to apply agroecological approaches and innovate for sustainable and resilient agroecological agri-food systems; and,
- enhanced organisational capacity of farmer organisations and partner entities to support farmer-led agroecological innovation.

To achieve these results, FO-RI is developing a participatory approach structured around five components, each of which places farmers and their organisations at the core of action-research and innovation. It begins with a short inception phase. Strategic partners (at continental, regional, national, and local level), including FOs, agricultural agencies, and researchers, will be involved in the different aspects of implementation. Gender and youth dimensions are mainstreamed in all programme activities.

At the heart of the FORI are 13 action-research projects carried out by FOs with technical support from agricultural agencies and research bodies to design, test and disseminate innovations based on agroecological principles. The projects focus on one or several dimensions of the food system – production, transformation, marketing. In order to achieve results, it is necessary to strengthen the joint experimentation capacities between researchers and farmers and FOs to conduct experiments and develop agroecological approaches.

Local peer-to-peer training and events on agroecological themes will be organised. Special attention is given to women and youth participation in decision-making processes of FOs in context of local experiments. Sociopolitical conflicts and food and health crises in some countries could pose a risk affecting the smooth running of the programme. To address this, a close monitoring and evaluation process is in place. Together with the phased planning approach, this will allow for regular adjustments to activities and areas of intervention.

The scaling up of innovations related to agroecology and agroecological transition will be done through networks of similar programs worldwide. This knowledge sharing will build on the experiences, ideas and skills of farmers themselves. Coordination with donor and partner offices at regional and national levels will also be ensured. Capitalisation of relevant products and relevant experiences within and outside FO-RI will be organised and disseminated by FOs, agricultural agencies and AgriCord. This capitalisation will feed into the advocacy and lobbying programme to engage with policy makers to advance the agroecology agenda. To this end, partners from government, international and regional farmer organisations, research institutes will participate in advocacy events and multistakeholder platforms and dialogues. The programme recognises the potential reluctance of some governments to engage constructively with smallholder representatives. In this regard, smallholder farmers organised in national and regional farmer organisations are an asset in getting key messages to governments. Supporting their institutional development will improve their credibility and ability to advocate for their members' needs. The Green Deal also gives farmer organisations the impetus to engage effectively in the policy area, particularly with regard to agroecology.

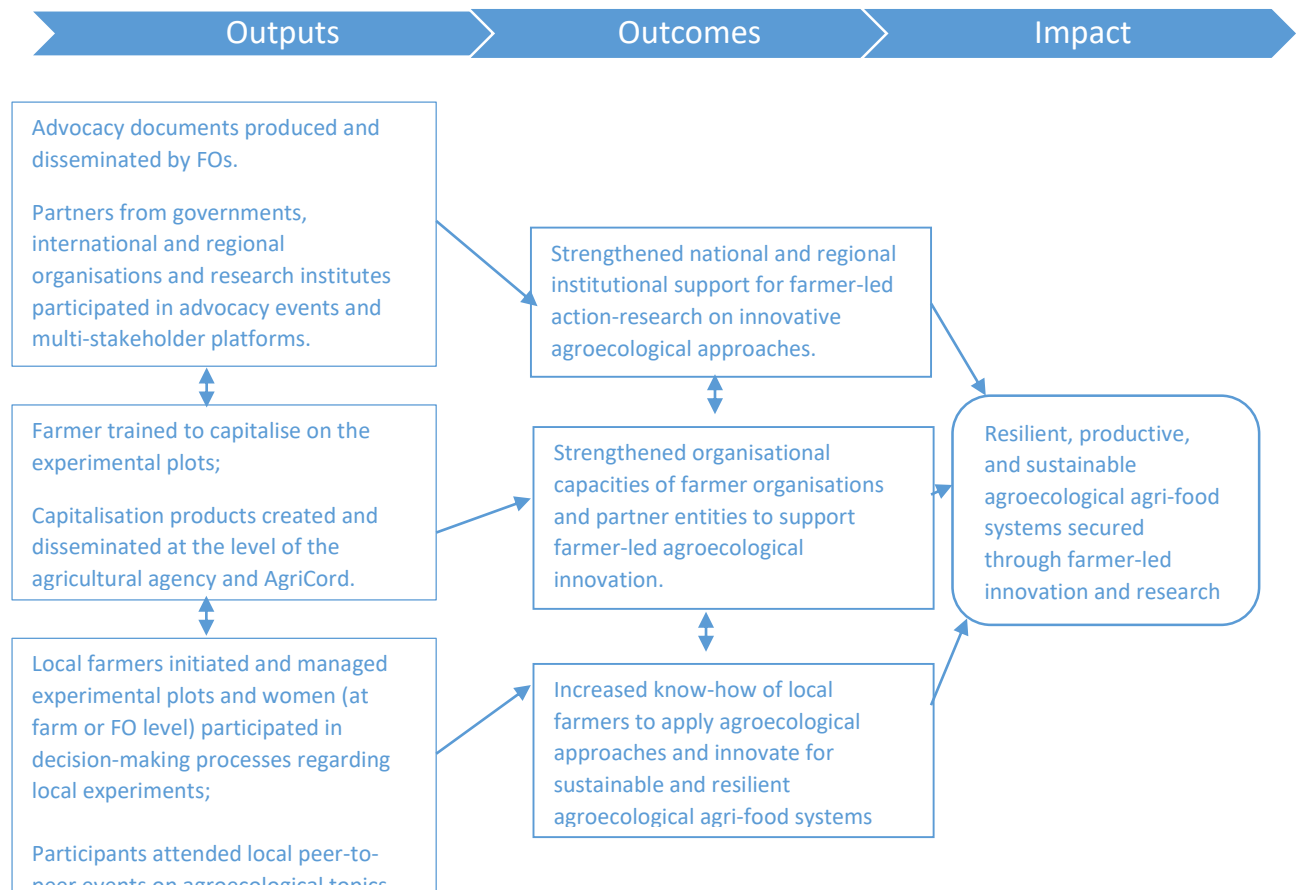


Figure 2: FO-RI impact pathway

## Main activities

### Component 1 'Advocacy and lobbying'

- identification of constraints and enabling factors for agroecology and farmer-led research on agroecology;
- development of a set of advocacy and lobbying strategies;
- strengthening of multi-stakeholder platforms;
- dissemination of advocacy and lobbying materials;
- capacity-building;
- participation in policy dialogues and workshops with governments;
- networking and partnership building.

### Component 2 'Cross-cutting methodological development and support, capacity-building and capitalisation/systematisation'

- identifying approaches used to support agroecology;
- organising exchanges, facilitating dialogues with action-research project teams and providing them with guidance;
- systematising methodological guidelines and related learning resources on approaches methods and tools, participatory capacity needs assessment throughout the process;
- identifying best capacity building practices;

- implementing tailored capacity-building events for farmers, farmer organisations and their key partners at different levels;
- evaluating the impact of capacity-building activities;
- mapping current good practice in agroecological innovation and transition at local level;
- generating and disseminating FO and farmer knowledge products;
- seek partnerships with existing media and/or projects to at promote and disseminate agroecological practices;
- seeking partnerships for dissemination;
- organising knowledge management events;
- compiling accessible information to be shared in the community of practice.

### **Component 3 ‘Overall coordination and management’**

- supporting overall programme management;
- supervising the operational and financial implementation of the action;
- monitoring and evaluation.

### **Component 4 ‘Action-research’**

- inception phase for collective development and validation of detailed work plans;
- capacity-building for a locally adapted monitoring, evaluation, and participatory learning system, diagnosis and baseline studies for the overall programme;
- systematisation and sharing of experiences and innovations related to agroecology or to participatory approaches and farmer-led on-farm experimentation;
- farmer experiments for better markets access;
- design of governance modalities for action research;
- capacity building, mentoring, coaching of FOs to expose them to different agroecological approaches;
- advocacy and lobbying at local, subnational and sometimes national levels.

### **Component 5 ‘Small grants to support ad hoc projects’**

- call for applications on specific topics, analysis of applications received, validation of applications by the Steering Committee.

## Organisation

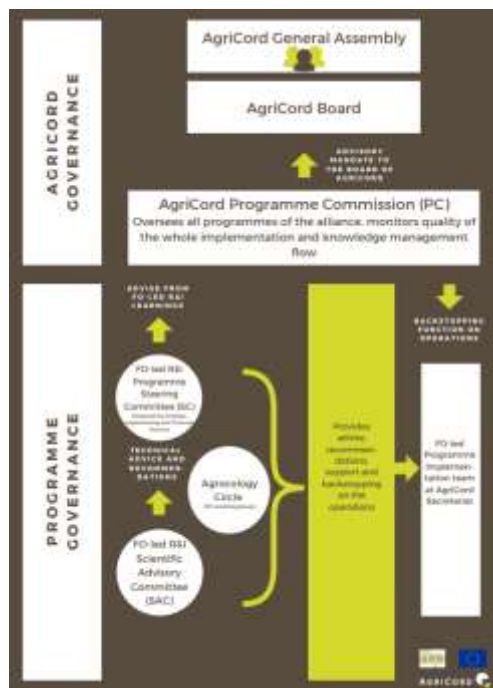


Figure 3: Governance of the FO-RI programme

AgriCord leads the programme. The governance of FO-RI includes a steering committee with participation of farmer organisations, AgriCord and financial partners, including the European Union and the Secretariat of the Organisation of the African, Caribbean and Pacific States, as well as a scientific advisory committee external to the AgriCord Alliance<sup>1</sup>. These three groups will be providing advice, recommendations and support for the operations of the programme. They will also validate additional grants to ad hoc action-research projects proposed by strategic partners along the way.

### Implementing organisations

**AgriCord.** FO-RI is led by AgriCord Alliance, with a technical and administrative secretariat based in Brussels (Belgium).

### Main partners

- Agriculteurs français et développement international (AFDI), France
- Association sénégalaise pour la promotion du développement à la base (ASPRODEB), Sénégal
- Collectif Stratégies Alimentaires (CSA),
- FERT, France
- We Effect, Sweden
- Food and Forest Development (FFD)
- UPA-DI, Canada
- Infocos (Brazi)

### Other stakeholders include at the national level:

- Confédération Paysanne du Faso (CPF), Burkina Faso
- Conseil national de concertation et de coopération des ruraux (CNCR), Senegal
- Association des jeunes agriculteurs de Casamance (AJAC), Senegal
- Fédération des organisations non gouvernementales du Sénégal – Action paysanne (FONGS), Senegal
- Concertation nationale des organisations paysannes au Cameroun (CNOP Cameroun)
- Confédération des associations des producteurs agricoles pour le développement (CAPAD)
- Ligue des organisations des femmes paysannes du Congo (LOFEPACO)
- Association pour le progrès des paysans (FIFATA), Madagascar
- Conseil Expérimentation Formation en Fruits et Légumes (CEFFEL)
- Mtandao wa Vikundi vya Eakulima na Wafugaji Mkoa wa Arusha (MVIWAARUSHA), Tanzania
- Tanzanian Tree Growers Association Union (TTGAU), Tanzania

<sup>1</sup> AgriCord is a global alliance of 12 agricultural agencies mandated by farmer organisations.

- Foundation for Agrarian Reform Cooperatives in Mindanao, Inc. (FARMCOOP), The Philippines
- Pacific Island Farmers Organisation Network (PIFON)
- Union des coopératives caféières de Baptiste (UCOCAB)
- Comisión Nacional de Fomento Rural (CNFR), Uruguay

### **Grassroot farmer organisations**

- Union nationale des producteurs d'oignons du Burkina (UNAPOB)
- Union régionale des coopératives semencières de Koulikoro (URCSK), Mali
- Coopérative centrale du Nord-Kivu (COOCENKI), DR Congo
- Fédération des organisations des producteurs agricoles du Congo (FOPAC)
- Syndicat de défense des intérêts paysans (SYDIP), Congo
- Vovomam'ny Fikambanan'ny Tantsahan'ny Vakinankaratra (VFTV), Madagascar
- Fikambanana Fampandrosoana ny Tantsaha Amoron'i Mania (Fifatam), Madagascar
- Fédération Sahi, Madagascar
- Farmers groups in the Arusha, Monduli and Karatu districts, Tanzania
- Njombe Agricultural Development Organization (NADO), Tanzania
- Checkered Farm Agrarian Reform Beneficiaries Multi-purpose Cooperative (CFARBEMPCO)
- DAPCO Agrarian Reform Beneficiaries Cooperative - Individual Farming System (DARBCO-IPS)
- Modified Development System Agrarian Reform Beneficiaries Cooperative (MDS- ARBCO), The Philippines
- Diamond Agrarian Reform Beneficiaries Multi-Purpose Cooperative (DARBMUPCO), Philippines
- Tutu Rural Training Center, Fiji Islands
- Kastom Garden Association, Solomon Islands
- PNG Women in Agriculture Development, Papua New Guinea
- Farm Support Association, Vanuatu
- Growers Federation of Tonga
- Plateforme nationale des producteurs de c
- Local farmers organisations in Brazil and Uruguay.

**Other main stakeholders** include research partners and strategic farmers organisations at various levels.

### **Location**

- Africa: Burkina, Mali, Senegal, Cameroun, Burundi, RDC, Madagascar, Tanzania
- Asia: Philippines
- Pacific region: Fiji, Tonga, Solomon Islands, and Samoa
- Caribbean: Haiti
- Latin America: Brazil and Uruguay

### **Funding and co-funding**

Total budget: EUR 10 338 442.10

EU Contribution: EUR 9 828 421.60 (or 95,07)

**Duration:** 5 years (February 2022 - December 2026)