

## Dialogue on Agroecological Approaches and Soil Health – purpose and summary

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Agroecology approaches and soil health are topics that have gained a central place in dialogues and debates around agrifood research and innovation (R&I), including within the EIARD network. The aim of this EIARD Dialogue was to have an open and constructive discussion with organizations to seek a better understanding and identify a common ground around agroecology and how the approach addresses soil health. The meeting comprised four presentations.

The first presentation on the European Commission's (EC) perspective on agroecology emphasized increased commitment of the European Union towards a vision of agroecological transformation based on the 13 principles of the High Level Panel of Experts on Food Security and Nutrition (HLPE) of the Committee on World Food Security (CFS) and the 10 elements of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO). This commitment is evident in EC support to various agroecological initiatives. The presenter stressed that agroecological approaches are context based – transitions of agricultural systems are certainly not the same in all the countries.

The second presentation on the perspective of the [Agroecology Coalition](#) highlighted the need for a paradigm shift towards diversified agroecological systems taking a holistic and integrated approach, linking different dimensions of food systems. Key is the uptake of appropriate institutional, technological, and social innovations that are compatible with the principles and elements of agroecology, combining scientific and local knowledge. This means changing social relations, empowering farmers, adding value locally and privileging short value chains linking consumers and producers.

The third presentation on the CGIAR perspective focused on the CGIAR's [Agroecology Initiative](#). The initiative was designed in a way to not only emphasize agroecological practices, but also consider the enabling environment and behavioural change that is needed to support agroecological transitions. There is evidence that agroecological practices contribute to productivity but have also other impacts. This is, however, less visible in the literature and in policy and programmes assessments. It calls for the development of a holistic assessment framework that accounts for the different synergies and trade-offs associated with agroecological transitions.

The final presentation introduced the Dutch-supported [Subsidy Soil Fertility Program](#). Population growth necessitates productivity improvements. However, declining soil fertility – next to water – is a key factor limiting production and is further negatively impacted by climate change, conflict, fragility, governance issues, land degradation and other factors. The majority of farmers are smallholders with limited ability to invest. They need solutions that work for them, but this is more than just the implementation of technical interventions and there is a need to consider the context where the interventions take place. The program is aligned with agroecological principles, but agroecology is not explicitly mentioned.