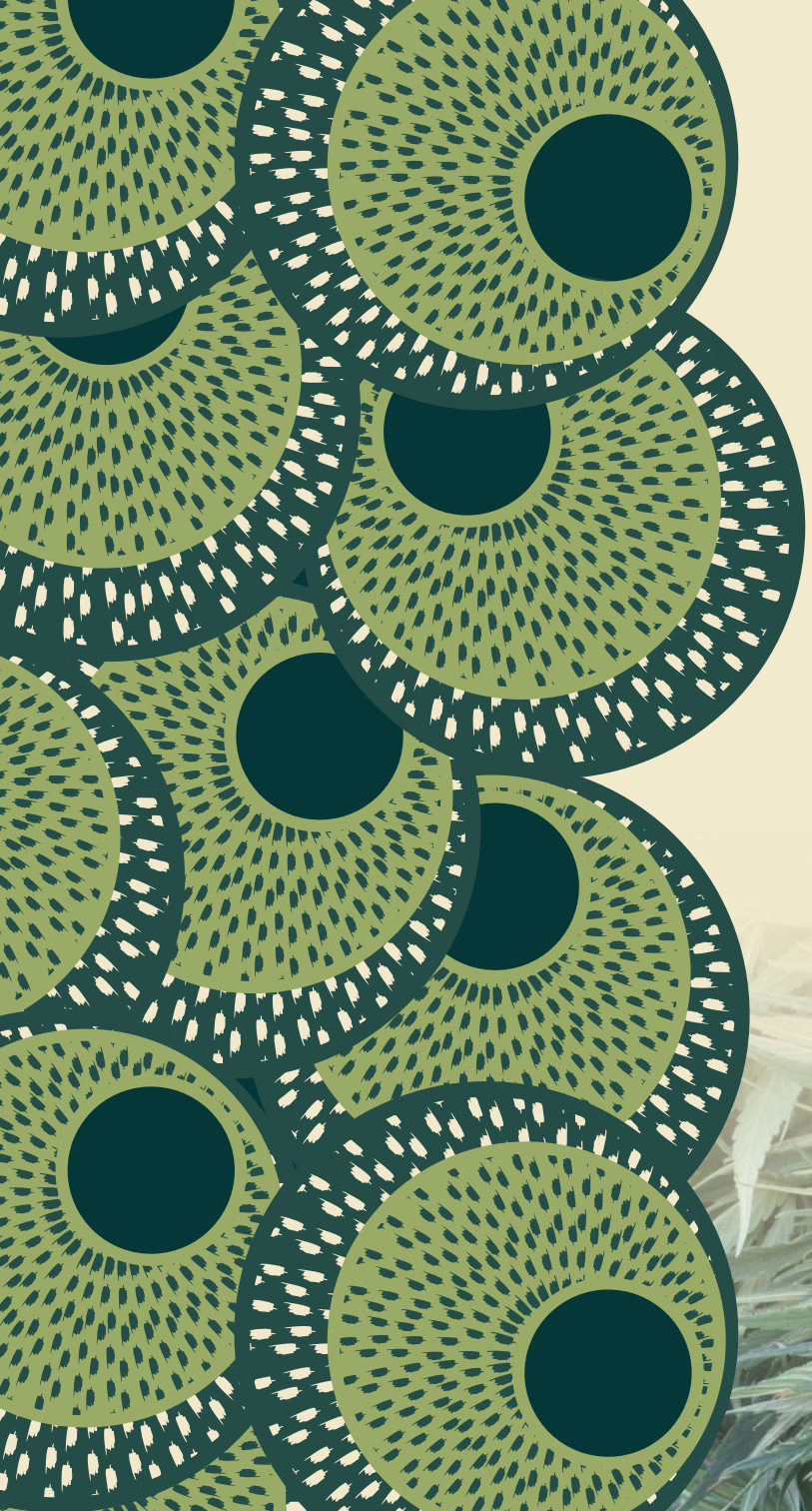
AFRICAN CENTRE FOR BIODIVERSITY

An assessment of support for agroecology in South Africa's policy landscape

BACKGROUND DOCUMENT



MAY 2023

AFRICAN CENTRE FOR BIODIVERSITY

The African Centre for Biodiversity (ACB) is committed to dismantling inequalities and resisting corporate industrial expansion in Africa's food and agriculture systems.

www.acbio.org.za

PO Box 29170, Melville 2109, Johannesburg, South Africa. Tel: +27 (0)11 486-1156

Researched and written by Stephen Greenberg

Cover image, design and layout: Adam Rumball, Sharkbuoys Designs, South Africa

Acknowledgements

We would like to express our gratitude to Porticus, whose financial support made this briefing paper possible.

Contents

Acronyms

AAMP	Agriculture and Agroprocessing Master Plan
APAP	Agriculture Policy Action Plan 2015-2019
CASP	Comprehensive Agricultural Support Programme
CCAMP	Agriculture Sector Climate Change Adaptation and Mitigation Plan
CSOs	Civil society organisations
DAFF	Department of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries (former)
DALRRD	Department of Agriculture, Land Reform and Rural Development
DFFE	Department of Forestry, Fisheries and Environment
DSBD	Department of Small Business Development
DSI	Department of Science and Innovation
DWS	Department of Water and Sanitation
ECOWAS	Economic Community of West African States
FAO	United Nation's Food and Agriculture Organisation
HLPE	FAO Committee on World Food Security (CFS) High Level Panel of Experts
IAASTD	International Assessment of Agricultural Knowledge, Science and Technology for Development
LVC	La Via Campesina
Nbs	Nature-based solutions
NCPDSP	National Comprehensive Producer Development Support Policy
NDP	National Development Plan
PC	Parliamentary Portfolio Committee on Agriculture, Land Reform and Rural Development
PCC	Presidential Climate Commission
PSA	Public Service Accountability Alliance
SMMEs	Small, medium and micro enterprises
SPP	Surplus People Project
TAFS	Transitions to Agroecological Food Systems
UNFSS	United Nations Food Systems Summit

Summary

Agroecology is gaining traction globally and in South Africa, and there are growing calls from practitioners and organisations for government to co-develop a national agroecology strategy for South Africa. Such a strategy can serve to integrate actions across agri-food systems, biodiversity, and climate change response. Civil society organisations met with the Parliamentary Portfolio Committee (PC) on Agriculture, Land Reform and Rural Development in March 2023 to share views on agroecology. The Chair of the PC requested more information on possible reasons why an earlier draft agroecology strategy and other draft policies in the Department of Agriculture, Land Reform and Rural Development (DALRRD) have stalled, and where agroecology fits within existing policies and framings. This report has been produced to assist in responding to that question.

The definition of agroecology used in the report is based on the 13 principles published in 2019 by the High-Level Panel of Experts on Food and Nutrition (HLPE) of the Committee on World Food Security (CFS), under the auspices of the UN Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO). The principles are adapted to the South African context, in particular through the inclusion of tailored examples of good practices for each of the principles, and alignment with food sovereignty. The principles are integrated in practice, but for purposes of simplicity are arranged into three core elements, namely:

- Ecological sustainability
- Social justice and redress
- Economic justice and participation

The HLPE principles provide a more specific and detailed frame for analysis and action than other more generic concepts such as climate smart agriculture (core elements are productivity, mitigation of emissions, and adaptation practices) or nature-based solutions. These latter concepts are so broad that they open the way for corporate and elite capture and manipulation, as they have done.

South African policy on agriculture and food systems suffers from a split personality. This is a product of the historical compromises made in the negotiated end to formal apartheid, which resulted in the transfer of formal political power to the black majority while leaving the "commanding heights of the economy" under the control of an elite class within the white minority. In agriculture, this meant the continuation of the large-scale commercial agricultural model at the core of the agro-food system, and then efforts to transform the sector and increase black participation and ownership in the economy within the constraints imposed by the continuation of this model.

One set of laws and policies accommodates and regulates the inherited large-scale commercial farming and agribusiness model, with the 2022 Agriculture and Agroprocessing Master Plan (AAMP) the latest of these. Driven by agribusiness, with limited civil society input, and funded through public-private partnerships, these plans have been the actual agricultural policy as implemented. This is particularly important in input production and supply, and in trade. There is little if any room for mixed farming, integrated production, or localised food production and use. These policies effectively generate a "lock-in" to the use of conventional inputs and restrict the development of integrated ecological alternatives.

Another set of policy documents include smallholder support, local markets, ecological production, climate change adaptation, and biodiversity conservation and sustainable use, and are far more amenable to agroecological principles. Many of these policies were developed over the past 15 years, but remain in draft form and are either selectively implemented, or not implemented at all, in any meaningful way. Despite some strong ecological components in smallholder farmer support policies, farmer support in practice still takes the form of subsidies to farmers for conventional inputs, including genetically modified (GM) and hybrid seed, synthetic fertiliser, toxic pesticides, and large, top-down projects that inevitably disintegrate over time as they are not appropriate to the needs of most smallholder producers. These dominant programmes squeeze out diversity and alternatives.

Ongoing institutional restructuring has been under way following the merging of departments in 2019 to form the DALRRD and plans to review departmental policies have created uncertainty on future direction. This is compounded by the political administration also being due for rotation in 2024. It is in this climate of policy uncertainty and contradiction that we have developed the assessment.

Overall, the assessment indicates that there are many areas of overlap in the existing suite of policy documents that can support an agroecological

approach, but there is also a need to consolidate and integrate these elements into an overarching strategy. This can provide coherence, structure and orientation to a relatively disconnected but related suite of policies and implementation plans, as well as provide an effective integrating framework for agri-food systems, biodiversity and climate change response.

The analysis is based on a detailed review of 22 key policy documents, mainly in agriculture and environment but including others. The HLPE 13 principles are used as a framing device to assess the policies. Different agroecological principles are covered in different policies. A key point we are making is that agroecological principles can be found scattered throughout South Africa's policy documents. There is need for consolidation, but mostly the principles are already covered at least to some extent, and existing policies can be built on. At the minimum, this indicates that agroecology is not in opposition to the government's stated agenda. At best, agroecology can be used as a framing to integrate these elements.

The assessment finds that the principles of participation, land and natural resource governance, economic diversification, input reduction and biodiversity are strongly reflected across the reviewed suite of national policies and plans. Also fairly well represented are the principles of recycling, co-creation of knowledge, and social values (but not including social diets). Less well represented principles are soil health, synergy, fairness and connectivity. Weak points are social diets (nutrition) and animal health.

Five key policy documents that more comprehensively promote a number of principles of agroecology are identified. These are:

- Agriculture Sector Climate Change Adaptation and Mitigation Plan draft 2015
- National Policy on Comprehensive Producer Development Support draft 2019
- Conservation Agriculture Policy draft 2022
- White Paper on Conservation and Sustainable Use of Biodiversity draft 2022
- Just Transition Framework 2022

However, no single policy or small group of generally supportive policies are sufficient on their own to be used as a proxy for an agroecology strategy, or to provide the integrating function that agroecology can.

The assessment clearly shows that there are multiple elements of agroecology across many policies. But in practice, there is continued support for conventional inputs and processes, especially through input subsidies in the farmer support programmes. Extension and training services remain focused on conventional agriculture. To build resilience and sustainability in the food system requires deliberate interventions to shift this state of affairs, including provision of more systematic support for integrating approaches like agroecology.

The report concludes with some pathways forward, including proposing:

- Use of an agroecology framing to integrate policy, planning and action across agri-food systems, biodiversity and climate change response
- Development of an agroecology strategy that integrates elements of agri-food systems, biodiversity and climate change response plans and actions across departments and programmes
- Piloting of multi-actor place-based initiatives for integrated approaches and support
- Review the existing suite of commercial laws and policies, in particular to remove the obstacles to producers expanding their agroecological practices

Introduction

Background

In recent times, the call from the ground has become louder for an agroecology policy or strategy in South Africa, to provide a framework and support for agroecological practitioners. An open letter sent to the Department of Agriculture, Land Reform and Rural Development (DALRRD) in December 2022, calling for engagement with civil society and the co-development of an agroecology strategy, was endorsed by 58 organisations.[1] The letter, also copied to the Parliamentary Portfolio Committee (PC) on Agriculture, Land Reform and Rural Development, resulted in the PC granting a meeting with civil society representatives on 14 March, 2023 to elaborate on the issues and contents of the letter.[2] At that meeting, the Chair of the PC asked presenting organisations what they thought the reasons may be for why the draft agroecology strategy and other draft policies have stalled, and where agroecology fits within existing policies and framings. This report has been produced to assist in responding to that question.

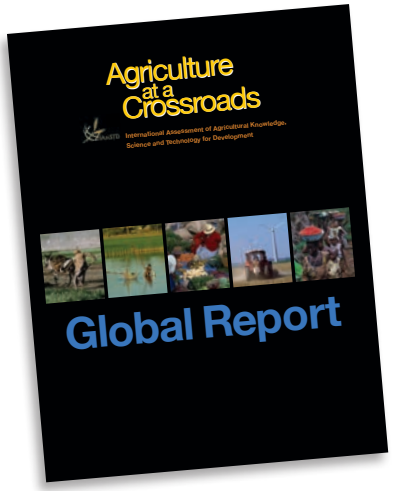
The report builds on and deepens an initial policy scan conducted in 2021 under the auspices of the Transitions to Agroecological

1. "Open letter to Minister Thoko Didiza, calling for an agroecology strategy and programme in the Department of Agriculture, Land Reform and Rural Development", 2 December 2022. https://acbio.org.za/corporate-expansion/cso-call-out-dalrrd-agroecology
2. Parliamentary Monitoring Group 2023. *Agroecology Strategy and Plan for South Africa: stakeholder input*. https://pmg.org.za/committee-meeting/36544/

Food Systems (TAFS) project,[3] and systematically works through key policy and strategy documents,[4] to identify where agroecological principles are supported and where there may be gaps.

African farmers in South Africa have *de facto* adopted ecological production practices since prior to colonisation. This is partly rooted in traditional practices in dynamic interaction with changing environmental conditions, and partly a result of colonial and apartheid strangling of African agriculture. This led to low external input agricultural practices in response. In commercial farming, there is also a history of organic farming since the 1970s.[5]

The term "agroecology" has gained much traction globally, especially in the past 10-15 years, as a response to unsustainable agro-food systems and climate change. Significant work was done by La Via Campesina (LVC) and multiple allied movements and proponents in the past decades to promote food sovereignty and agroecology as appropriate and necessary responses for sustainable agri-food systems. These efforts broke into the mainstream especially from 2009, when the International Assessment of Agricultural Knowledge, Science and Technology for Development (IAASTD) report[6] was released, which recommended the adoption of agroecology as a pathway to sustainable food systems.



Following this, Surplus People Project (SPP) and others initiated a dialogue between civil society and then Department of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries (DAFF) on the report and its application in South Africa. This led to the development of a draft National Agroecology Strategy, but this was shelved in 2013 due to lack of a durable political process to support it. Nevertheless, the concept of agroecology has taken root in South Africa and practitioners and organisations subsequently have developed

3. Greenberg, S. and Drimie, S. 2021. *The state of the debate on agroecology in South Africa: A scan of actors, discourses and policies*. https://www.southernafricafoodlab.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/07/TAFS-South-Africa_step-1-final-report_13-July-2021.pdf
4. "Policy documents" is used as shorthand for officially adopted government documents including laws, policies, frameworks, strategies and plans.
5. Greenberg and Drimie, 2021, as above
6. McIntyre, B., Herren, H., Wakhungu, J. and Watson, R. (eds). 2009. *Agriculture at a crossroads: International Assessment of Agricultural Knowledge, Science and Technology for Development (IAASTD) global report*, Island Press, Washington DC. https://wedocs.unep.org/handle/20.500.11822/7862

approaches to agroecology framed in the context of food sovereignty (see Annex 1 on the defining principles of food sovereignty drawn from the Nyéléni Food Sovereignty Forum held in Mali in 2007). In essence, practitioners and organisations in South Africa have identified three core elements for agroecology, namely:

- Ecological sustainability
- Social justice and redress
- Economic justice and participation.

While there is diversity in the approaches there is widespread agreement on the basic elements. These core elements. which have emerged from homestead and smallholder farmers and support organisations in South Africa, align well with established global principles, mostly notably the United Nation's Food and Agriculture Organisation's (FAO) 10 elements of agroecology,[7] and more recently the FAO Committee on World Food Security (CFS) High Level Panel of Experts' (HLPE) 13 principles of agroecology[8] (Annex 2). These latter principles incorporate the FAO 10 elements but somewhat expand and strengthen the social and economic justice aspects of the definition of agroecology.

7. FAO. 2018. *The 10 elements of agroecology: Guiding the transition to sustainable food and agricultural systems*. https://www.fao.org/documents/card/en/c/I9037EN/
8. HLPE 2019. *Agroecological and other innovative approaches for sustainable agriculture and food systems that enhance food security and nutrition*. Report by the High Level Panel of Experts on Food Security and Nutrition of the Committee on World Food Security, Rome. https://www.fao.org/3/ca5602en/ca5602en.pdf

The HLPE's 13 principles have been adopted by numerous institutions including the recently formed Agroecology Coalition,[9] which emerged in response to the UN Food Systems Summit (UNFSS). This multi-actor coalition currently including 39 countries and many national and multi-lateral research institutes, donors and civil society organisations (CSOs). African governments have strongly embraced the Coalition, with 17 African governments plus the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the African Union signing onto the Coalition to date. While the HLPE principles and the Agroecology Coalition do encounter suspicion from some in the food sovereignty movement, responses have varied, and with regard

9. https://agroecology-coalition.org/

to the HLPE principles there is cautious acceptance from most parties including social movements.[10]

The HLPE principles provide a more specific and detailed frame for analysis and action than other more generic concepts such as climate smart agriculture (productivity, mitigation of emissions, adaptation practices) or nature-based solutions (NbS). These latter concepts are so broad that they have opened the way for corporate capture and manipulation. The HLPE principles provide the framing for the policy assessment in this report.

Food sovereignty proponents take an unapologetically anti-capitalist stance on agri-food system transitions. South African agroecology and food sovereignty movements rightfully defend the space that they have helped to carve out for the expansion of agroecology against compromises on principles. These movements insist that the essential core of agroecology is a radical programme for food systems transformation in favour of the majority of producers and consumers, who are outside concentrated corporate-political power structures at all levels. While the HLPE principles are not explicitly anti-capitalist in themselves, there is nothing in the principles that contradicts or limits an anti-capitalist stance. As such, the HLPE principles are able to accommodate a wider collaboration across reformist, agroecological and food sovereignty proponents,[11] as a common denominator that leaves room for autonomy in thinking and practice while identifying points of potential unity.

Policy context

South African policy on agriculture and food systems suffers from a split personality. This is a product of the historical compromises made in the negotiated end to formal apartheid, which resulted in the transfer of formal political power to the black majority while leaving the "commanding heights of the economy" under the control of an elite class within the white minority.[12] In agriculture, this meant the continuation of the large-scale commercial agricultural model at the core of the agro-food system, and then efforts to transform the sector and increase black participation and ownership in the economy within the constraints imposed by the continuation of this model.

There are two sets of policies. The one set is to accommodate and regulate the inherited large-scale commercial farming and agribusiness model. Key policies that ensure the continuity of this commercial core include the Fertiliser, Farm Remedies, Agricultural Remedies and Stock Remedies Act 36 of 1947; the Agricultural Products Standards Act 119

10. Varghese, S. 2022. *Agroecology takes central stage in the global agenda for transforming agriculture and food systems*, Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy. https://www.iatp.org/sites/default/files/2022-06/IATP_Agroecology%20Q%20and%20A_2022.pdf
11. Greenberg and Drimie, 2021, as above, p.19
12. Bond, P. 2000. *Elite transition: From apartheid to neoliberalism in South Africa*. Pluto Press/University of Natal Press, London/Pietermaritzburg; Wood, E.J. 2000. *Forging democracy from below: Insurgent transitions in South Africa and El Salvador*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.

of 1990; the Genetically Modified Organisms Act 15 of 1997; the Plant Improvement Act 11 of 2018; and the Plant Breeders Rights Act 12 of 2018, as well as international trade agreements. These laws and agreements effectively generate a "lock-in" to the use of conventional inputs (discursively framed as standard setting and enforcement) and make it more difficult for smallholder and agroecological, and indeed even large-scale commercial, producers to develop alternatives.

Agribusiness has also effectively captured another stream of planning with a straight line from the National Development Plan (NDP) initiated in 2012, through the Agriculture Policy Action Plan 2015-2019 (APAP), and the Agriculture and Agroprocessing Master Plan (AAMP), approved in 2022. This policy strand provides strong evidence of a "policy hierarchy".

Driven by agribusiness, with limited civil society input, and funded through public-private partnerships, these plans have been the actual agricultural policy as implemented. The emphasis is on commercialisation, priority commodities, corporate value chains, exports, and competition. In this approach, technologies and intellectual property rights are key to corporate consolidation and domination in the input sector (pesticides, inorganic fertilisers, and seed both conventional and genetically engineered). Producers must either be capable of producing at scale for commercial markets or go home. There is no differentiation in strategy or support for the very diverse needs of small-scale producers. There is little if any room for mixed farming, integrated production, or localised food production and use. The AAMP is being sold as a social compact, but this is not true. Not only are agroecological farmers poorly if at all catered for in that plan, but the trade unions ended up not signing the final document, although they had been involved in developing it.

This "dominant paradigm" is hardly mentioned explicitly in the whole range of policies comprising a second set of policies, which propose greater smallholder support, local markets, ecological production, climate change adaptation, and biodiversity conservation and sustainable use. These documents, developed over the past 15 years – though many remain in draft form – are far more amenable to an agroecological interpretation. But they are either selectively implemented or not implemented in any meaningful way. The dominant discourse of farming as a business, competition as the driving force of the economy, and economies of scale, remain an unstated framing for the policies. Thus, despite the relatively strong environmental dimensions in some of the smallholder support policies (discussed in more detail in the assessment below), in practice farmer support ends up taking the form of subsidies to farmers for conventional inputs including genetically modified and hybrid seed, synthetic fertiliser, toxic pesticides, and large, top-down projects that inevitably disintegrate over time as they are not appropriate to the needs

of most smallholder producers.[13] The input subsidy programmes, including through the longstanding Comprehensive Agricultural Support Programme (CASP), Ilima/Letsema and Fetsa Tlala, the Massive Food Production Programme, etc., have resulted in a delivery model that emphasises standardisation of inputs regardless of context, and economies of scale (e.g. a single provincial supplier) that squeeze out alternative, ecological inputs from being included in options for farmers, if they are able to access the programmes.

Presently there is also quite some policy uncertainty. The DALRRD is proposing that the AAMP is used as the framework for civil society engagements with the Department around agroecology. As indicated, however, this programme is oriented towards corporate and export value chains, and has little to offer agroecological farmers in the current context. This insistence that AAMP is the de facto policy for the Department runs counter to the statement in the (draft) National Comprehensive Producer Development Support Policy (NCPDSP) that, "[t]he Policy will be the overall national policy for the agriculture sector in South Africa" (p.x). The AAMP was approved relatively quickly after completion, while the NCPDSP remains in draft form (together with a range of other policies that offer some glimmer of hope for support to environmentally-sustainable production, and social and economic redress and transformation).

This then raises the question as to whether these earlier policies can be used as a basis for an agroecology strategy. Are these draft policies obsolete as a result of political shifts, or are they still intact? The DALRRD is planning to undergo a comprehensive policy review along with the process of merging the former Agriculture, Rural Development and Land Reform departments (with Forestry and Fisheries merging with Environment). This is behind schedule and the administration is due for rotation again in 2024. It is in this climate of policy uncertainty and contradiction that we have developed the assessment below. It indicates that there are many areas of overlap in the existing raft of policy documents that can support an agroecological approach, but there is also a need to consolidate these elements and give them their own programme/strategy. This can provide coherence, structure and orientation to a relatively disconnected suite of policies and implementation plans.

13. ACB. 2018. "Input supply in South Africa's smallholder farmer support programmes: A tale of neo-apartheid plans, dodgy dealings and corporate capture", https://acbio.org.za/wp-content/uploads/2022/04/SA-FISP-report-WEB.pdf

Assessment of agroecological content of key South African policy documents

The analysis is based on a detailed review of 22 key policy documents (see Annex 3 for a list of documents reviewed) – mainly agriculture and environment but including others. The HLPE 13 principles are used as a framing device to assess the policies, building on work done by the Public Service Accountability (PSA) Alliance and others on developing an assessment system including an open-ended list of concrete indicators/examples of good practice for each principle[14] (Annex 2). These indicators/examples of good practice are provisional and open to alteration and revision at all times. In essence, they indicate an open set of examples that can be added to, removed or adapted to context. This is especially important for the food sovereignty movement, which wants to ensure that the more radical aspects of agroecology come through, especially

14. Partnership for Social Accountability (PSA) Alliance 2022. *Agroecology Financing Analysis Toolkit (AFAT) for the public sector in Africa*. https://psa.copsam.com/2022/11/25/new-analysis-tool-shows-low-support-for-agroecology-in-international-and-national-agricultural-funding-in-africa/

focusing on social and economic justice and redress. This includes explicit reference to anti-capitalism and a stronger emphasis on limitations on land size; land and water redistribution and secure access; an end to exploitation of farm workers; food for need in national territory with priority over exports; and alertness against "greenwashing".

It is important to note at the outset that different agroecological principles are covered in different policies. A key point we are making is that agroecological principles can be found scattered throughout South Africa's policy documents. There is need for consolidation, but mostly the principles are already covered to a large extent, and existing policies can be built on. At the minimum, this indicates that agroecology is not in opposition to the government's stated agenda. **All of the statements below are explicitly supported by specific statements in the reviewed policy documents** (specific references and page numbers can be provided as needed).

15. Food sovereignty uses the contributions of nature in diverse, low external input agroecological production and harvesting methods that maximise the contribution of ecosystems and improve resilience and adaptation, especially in the face of climate change; it seeks to heal the planet so that the planet may heal us; and, rejects methods that harm beneficial ecosystem functions, that depend on energy-intensive monocultures and livestock factories, destructive fishing practices and other industrialised production methods, which damage the environment and contribute to global warming.

RECYCLING

Recycling is described by the HLPE as preferentially using local renewable resources, and closing as far as possible resource cycles of nutrients and biomass. Recycling, along with other ecological principles below (input reduction, soil health, animal health, biodiversity, land and natural resource governance, synergy) align with the food sovereignty principle of working with nature.[15]

The principle of recycling is mentioned in 11 of the 22 reviewed policy documents, and is a significant element in three of them. Water harvesting is mentioned in numerous documents and is highly supported. Other practices covered in policy documents include decentralised solar energy, biomass, biogas, community seed banks and seed saving in general, waste recycling at source, use of manure and crop residues, and composting. More recently, the concept of the circular economy has been introduced into policy documents.

> **"A circular economy consists of 'closing the loop' between resource extraction and waste disposal by the application of waste avoidance, reuse, repair, recycling, and recovery throughout the economic cycle to minimise waste generated and reduce demand for virgin materials as production inputs."**
> (National Waste Management Strategy, 2020:25)

Key documents supporting the principle of recycling:
- Bioeconomy Strategy 2013
- Agriculture Sector Climate Change Adaptation and Mitigation Plan (CCAMP) draft 2015
- National Waste Management Strategy 2020

INPUT REDUCTION

Input reduction is described by the HLPE as reducing or eliminating dependency on purchased inputs, and increasing self-sufficiency. As such it refers primarily to reducing external inputs, and we may extend this further to focus on reduction of use of externally produced conventional agricultural inputs in particular, including synthetic agrochemicals (fertiliser and toxic pesticides), seed – in particular hybrids and genetically modified organisms (GMOs) – large-scale mechanisation, and fossil fuels. This principle receives explicit support in 15 of the 22 reviewed policy documents, and is significant in five of them. Water use efficiency is a key element across numerous policy documents, including irrigation efficiency (e.g. conversion to drip irrigation where feasible, irrigation scheduling), mulching and other soil water retention methods, and water harvesting. Other elements of input reduction covered in policy documents include renewable energy, appropriate and environmentally-friendly mechanisation, reduction or elimination of externally-produced synthetic fertilisers and pesticides, and replacement with ecological alternatives (e.g. green and animal manures, composting, legumes for

nitrogen fixation, biopesticides), and seed saving and reuse. Importantly, the draft Conservation Agriculture Policy in particular also extends input reduction strategies to large-scale commercial farming.

Key documents supporting the principle of input reduction:

- Pesticide Management Policy 2010
- Bioeconomy Strategy 2013
- Agriculture Sector Climate Change Adaptation and Mitigation Plan (CCAMP) draft 2015
- National Policy on Comprehensive Producer Development Support draft 2019
- Conservation Agriculture Policy draft 2022

SOIL HEALTH

Soil health is described by the HLPE as securing and enhancing soil health and functioning for improved plant growth, particularly by managing organic matter and enhancing soil biological activity. This principle finds support in seven of the 22 reviewed policy documents, and is significant in three of these. The policy documents indicate strong interconnections between soil health and biodiversity, land management, and climate change response. Soil health is core to the Conservation Agriculture approach, which incorporates minimum or no till, permanent soil cover, and plant diversification including the use of legumes as core defining features. Other agroecological practices explicitly indicated in policy documents as facilitating soil health are crop rotation, intercropping, mulching, composting, generally practices that increase soil organic matter content, and livestock integration with sustainable grazing management. Soil health is closely tied in policy documents to water management and soil and water conservation.

Key documents supporting the principle of soil health:

- Agriculture Sector Climate Change Adaptation and Mitigation Plan draft 2015
- National Policy on Comprehensive Producer Development Support draft 2019
- Conservation Agriculture Policy draft 2022

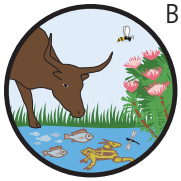
ANIMAL HEALTH

Animal health is described by the HLPE simply as ensuring animal health and welfare. This is one of the weakest elements in policy documents. It is partially covered in only two of the 22 reviewed documents. The Animal Protection Act of 1962 is strong on preventing animal cruelty but does not offer positive aspects of animal health, such as explicitly promoting free-range and grass-fed practices, or use of natural medication. The draft White Paper on Conservation and Sustainable Use of Biodiversity from 2022 expands animal health concerns to wild animals and promotes dignity of animals with regard to anthropomorphic activities. The Meat Safety Act 40 of 2000 (not one of the reviewed documents) also points to elements of animal dignity in the context of slaughtering of animals.

Key documents supporting the principle of animal health:

- Animal Protection Act 1962
- White Paper on Conservation and Sustainable Use of Biodiversity draft 2022

BIODIVERSITY



Biodiversity is described by the HLPE as maintaining and enhancing the diversity of species, functional diversity, and genetic resources, thereby maintaining overall agroecosystem biodiversity in time and space at field, farm and landscape scales. This principle finds support in 11 of the 22 reviewed policy documents and is a significant element in six of these. The reviewed documents promote agricultural biodiversity, including:

- widening the range of farmers' varieties, landraces and indigenous crops and animals used for food and agriculture;
- diversified and locally adapted animals and crops;
- in situ conservation including community seed banks;
- farmer-to-farmer seed exchange, including seed fairs;
- conservation and sustainable use of wild relatives;
- agroforestry;
- sustainable grazing management and forage production; and
- soil biodiversity.

Integrated weed, pest and water management is explicitly stated, as well as reduction in the use of toxic pesticides in order to enhance biodiversity. Improved biodiversity is recognised as essential for agricultural production, including for healthy populations of pollinators and natural predators of agricultural pests.

The documents also cover wider biodiversity conservation and sustainable use, linked to rangeland and landscape management and ecosystem restoration, and the principle is thus strongly tied to the principle of land and natural resource governance. A link is made between biodiversity conservation and climate change adaptation. More recent policy documents highlight the potential for biodiversity-based socio-economic opportunities, thus establishing a link with the principle of economic diversification. The role of indigenous knowledge in biodiversity conservation and use is indicated, thus linking with the principles of co-creation of knowledge and participation. Overall, biodiversity conservation and sustainable use is considered a key element in reducing system vulnerability and increasing resilience in diversified, adapted farming systems.

Key documents supporting the principle of biodiversity:

- Agriculture Sector Climate Change Adaptation and Mitigation Plan draft 2015
- National Plan for Conservation and Sustainable Use of Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture 2017
- National Policy on Comprehensive Producer Development Support draft 2019

- Conservation Agriculture Policy draft 2022
- White Paper on Conservation and Sustainable Use of Biodiversity draft 2022
- Presidential Climate Commission (PCC) Just Transition Framework 2022

LAND AND NATURAL RESOURCE GOVERNANCE

Land and natural resource governance is described by the HLPE as strengthening institutional arrangements to improve governance, including the recognition and support of family farmers, smallholders, and peasant food producers, as sustainable managers of natural and genetic resources. At the outset we would want to expand this principle to integrate agricultural production into wider processes of participatory ecosystem and landscape management. As indicated in Annex 2, this incorporates participatory and collective biodiversity conservation and sustainable use; land restoration; and management of riparian systems (waterways, rivers, wetlands etc). The integration of agricultural production and planning into wider landscape processes is really the lynchpin of longer-term sustainability in the management and use of natural resources.

This principle is elaborated in 14 of the 22 reviewed policy documents, and is significant in six of these. The reviewed documents call for the adoption of multi-objective landscape and agro-ecosystem planning frameworks, including the use of agroecological principles, and promoting regenerative agricultural systems and bioresource management. This framework incorporates:

- land (rangelands, grazing management)
- water (wetlands, watercourses, catchments)
- biodiversity (including promoting tree cover, rehabilitation of woodlands, thickets and natural forests, reduction of deforestation, grassland protection, control of alien invasive species)
- veld and soil conservation (including earthworks)

Ecosystem-based approaches for climate change adaptation and mitigation are highlighted across a number of the documents, and multiple ecosystem services are emphasised. There is strong emphasis on protection, restoration and sustainable use of natural resources. Rewilding, connected terrestrial conservation landscapes, and expansion of protected areas under community control in communal and land reform areas are stated in a number of the documents. Policy documents place emphasis on participatory and community-based processes, co-management, community ownership and stewardship, as well as recognition of indigenous knowledge. This offers a strong link with the principles of participation and co-creation of knowledge.

Key documents supporting the principle of land and natural resource governance:

- Agriculture Sector Climate Change Adaptation and Mitigation Plan draft 2015
- National Policy on Comprehensive Producer Development Support draft 2019
- National Climate Change Adaptation Strategy 2019
- Conservation Agriculture Policy draft 2022
- White Paper on Conservation and Sustainable Use of Biodiversity draft 2022
- Just Transition Framework 2022

SYNERGY

Synergy is described by the HLPE as enhancing positive ecological interaction, synergy, integration and complementarity among the elements of agroecosystems (animals, crops, trees, soil and water). This principle can also speak to synergies across the principles themselves. The principle finds support in eight of the 22 reviewed policy documents, and is significant in two of these. Key elements of synergy in the documents are aligned with the principle of land and natural resource governance, with complementarities identified around integrated water, land and biodiversity management and sustainable use, and the multiple ecosystem services provided by sustainable natural resource management. Synergistic practices highlighted in agricultural production are livestock-crop integration, agroforestry, crop rotation, intercropping including the use of legumes, and use of compost and manure. Incorporation of economic, cultural and spiritual dimensions of natural resource management and use also offer synergies.

Key documents supporting the principle of synergy:

- Agriculture Sector Climate Change Adaptation and Mitigation Plan draft 2015
- Conservation Agriculture Policy draft 2022

CO-CREATION OF KNOWLEDGE

Co-creation of knowledge is described by the HLPE as enhancing co-creation and horizontal sharing of knowledge, including local and scientific innovation, especially through farmer-to-farmer exchange. This principle find support in 11 of the 22 reviewed policy documents, and is significant in two of these. Reviewed documents promote indigenous knowledge systems, African perspectives and approaches, local knowledge, peer-to-peer learning, including:

- study groups
- farmer field schools, farmer-to-farmer and participatory extension and mentorship
- demonstrations and learning workshops
- participatory on-farm, farmer-led research and experimentation
- community stewardship of natural resources

- community seed banks
- multi-actor collaborative pilot projects

The reviewed policies contain numerous references more generally to the form and content of research, education and training. Emphasis is on participation and co-creation of knowledge. Policies strongly support the inclusion of diverse topics of relevance in agricultural curricula at all levels, in extension training and in on-farm, farmer-driven research and learning processes. There is strong support for multidisciplinary and pluralistic approaches, and integration of agriculture, forestry, fisheries and conservation extension and training. Topics advanced in the policies for inclusion in education and training include:

- sustainable agriculture
- green jobs
- food and nutrition security
- ecosystem-based approaches
- ecosystem-based approaches
- climate change adaptation
- agroecology practices
- climate smart agriculture
- indigenous knowledge

Key documents supporting the principle of co-creation of knowledge:
- National Policy on Extension and Advisory Services 2016
- Conservation Agriculture Policy draft 2022

SOCIAL VALUES AND DIETS

Social values and diets are described by the HLPE as building food systems based on the culture, identity, tradition, social and gender equity of local communities that provide healthy, diversified, seasonally and culturally appropriate diets. "Social values" is interpreted more widely in this report to incorporate more general elements as indicated in Annex 2, such as food sovereignty, the right to food, gender equity, redress of past injustice, and others. It is clear that the overall policy framework for South Africa is strongly influenced by 'progressive' (forward looking, inclusive) social values, from the Constitution down into all the laws and policies of the country. This is a legacy of the struggle against apartheid, and strongly emphasises redress of racial injustice, promotion of gender equity, and generally supports a focus on the marginalised and impoverished. The Constitution is taken as the guide for all policies developed after 1994, although not all policies elaborate in detail on the social justice and equity dimensions. This principle finds explicit expression in 17 of the 22 reviewed policy documents, and is significant in four of these. It should be noted that the social values aspect of this principle (as revised and reinterpreted here) is much stronger in the documents than the social diets aspect, and these were assessed separately.

With regard to social values, a number of the reviewed documents emphasise equity and inclusion, dignity,

participation, rights, indigenous culture, "sacred appreciation" and spiritual practices, social solidarity, redress, priority support to vulnerable and marginalised groups and members in the population, and putting people at the centre, with explicit reference to women's empowerment, in particular, and to a lesser extent inclusion of youth. In all the reviewed documents, there is just one explicit reference to the right to food. The right to food is included in Section 27 of the Bill of Rights in the Constitution, but is not carried through in any direct way into policies or programmes, as an imperative to ensure everyone has enough food to meet their needs every day. Improving the conditions of farm workers is mentioned in one document, which is also probably the only one of the documents in which the workers' movement made sustained input (the AAMP, which ironically is also the most neoliberal of the reviewed documents, see earlier). It should be noted, however, that many pieces of legislation and policies regarding farm worker rights and conditions, labour tenant rights, etc. were not reviewed here, and these aspects of social values are covered to a greater extent in other policies. The reviewed documents reinforce the strong link between social values and the principle of fairness.

The social diets component of this principle is much weaker in the reviewed documents, and indicates one of the few areas in which the documents do not adequately cover the agroecological principles. Only three of the reviewed documents make any reference to appropriate and nutritious diets. In two of these there is brief reference to promotion of indigenous foods, and in one (the National Food and Nutrition Strategy, 2018-2023) there is reference to access to affordable and nutritious food, dietary diversity, restricting the marketing of unhealthy foods, and promotion of breastfeeding.

Key documents supporting the principle of social values and diets:

- National Policy on Extension and Advisory Services 2016
- National Climate Change Adaptation Strategy 2019

PARTICIPATION

Participation is described by the HLPE as encouraging social organisation and greater participation in decision-making by food producers and consumers, to support decentralised governance and local adaptive management of agricultural and food systems. This principle is promoted in 15 of the 22 reviewed policy documents, and is significant in six of these. Areas identified in the reviewed documents on participation include:

- policy development
- planning
- decision-making
- multi-actor collaborations and partnerships
- extension
- research, including on-farm research and experimentation
- breeding programmes
- farmer-to-farmer learning and sharing

- community-based service delivery
- community ownership and management

This crosses a number of areas including agriculture, biodiversity conservation and use, environmental and natural resource governance, climate change adaptation, and nutrition. Across many of the documents, proposals are made for multi-actor fora at multiple levels for planning and implementation. Indeed, there is a proliferation of proposals for such fora without due consideration for how they can be integrated at each level (e.g. agriculture, extension, climate, nutrition), and without any significant implementation in practice.

Key documents supporting the principle of participation:

- National Policy on Extension and Advisory Services 2016
- National Policy on Comprehensive Producer Development Support draft 2019
- National Climate Change Adaptation Strategy 2019
- Conservation Agriculture Policy draft 2022
- White Paper on Conservation and Sustainable Use of Biodiversity draft 2022
- Just Transition Framework 2022

ECONOMIC DIVERSIFICATION

Economic diversification is described by the HLPE as diversifying on-farm incomes by ensuring that small-scale farmers have greater financial independence and value addition opportunities while enabling them to respond to demand from consumers. This can be widened to include other rural or natural resource-based economic opportunities. This principle is supported in 13 of the 22 reviewed policy documents, and is significant in six of them.

Areas of economic diversification supported in the documents are:

- expansion into new crops (e.g. indigenous tea, traditional medicine[16])
- input production and distribution (farmers' seed varieties/landraces, community seed production schemes, especially underutilised crops, compost production, natural pest control remedies, and low cost alternatives to agrochemicals)
- local manufacturing and distribution of agricultural machinery and technologies
- agro-processing
- transport
- informal trade

The emphasis is on black-, women- and youth-owned small, medium and micro enterprises (SMMEs). There is also policy support for local markets for smallholder farmers for direct sales to consumers and public procurement. More recent policy documents also expand economic diversification opportunities into the "biodiversity economy", such as land rehabilitation and biodiversity management, rewilding, tree planting, clearing and maintaining water catchments, wildlife-based activities, waste recovery and beneficiation, biogas production, eco-tourism, and more generally "green jobs". This is a potential pathway for income generation on land reform farms, mentioned in a number of documents. This approach could take the pressure off agricultural production on land reform farms, which could then be tailored to local needs without being forced into unsustainable commercial business models.

Key documents supporting the principle of economic diversification:

- Agriculture Sector Climate Change Adaptation and Mitigation Plan draft 2015
- National Food and Nutrition Strategy 2018-23
- National Waste Management Strategy 2020
- Agriculture and Agroprocessing Master Plan 2022
- White Paper on Conservation and Sustainable Use of Biodiversity draft 2022
- Just Transition Framework 2022

16. Cannabis is another new crop which has its own Master Plan that was not reviewed here (as it is commodity-specific) but is worth mentioning.

FAIRNESS

Fairness is described by the HLPE as supporting dignified and robust livelihoods for all actors engaged in food systems, especially small-scale food producers, based on fair trade, fair employment and fair treatment of intellectual property rights. Fair trade could be adapted to fair exchange to remove the connotation of branded Fair Trade exports. In the South African context ,we can add redistribution of resources, such as land, as a component of redress for past systemic injustices. Land reform policies were not reviewed here but contribute significantly to supporting the principle of fairness if implemented. The principle is promoted in nine of the reviewed policy documents, and is significant in one of them. Key elements of fairness in the documents are:

- redress, fair and equitable benefit sharing from the use of genetic resources and indigenous knowledge
- equitable access to and ownership of resources
- equitable and fair processes and procedures
- land redistribution
- decent labour conditions on farms and in agro-food value chains
- the 'polluter pays' principle
- roups and individuals in the application of policies

Key documents supporting the principle of fairness:
- White Paper on Conservation and Sustainable Use of Biodiversity draft 2022

CONNECTIVITY

Connectivity is described by the HLPE as ensuring proximity and confidence between producers and consumers through promotion of fair and short distribution networks and by re-embedding food systems into local economies. This principle is promoted in six of the 22 reviewed policy documents, and is significant in one of these. Areas of support are:

- development of local food networks
- value chains
- formal and informal markets
- farmer markets for direct sales to consumers
- local public procurement
- distribution and storage of food for the benefit of local households and communities.

Objectives highlighted are availability of food, lower prices, and improved nutrition. This is one of the principles with weaker support in the reviewed documents.

Key documents supporting the principle of connectivity:
- National Food and Nutrition Strategy 2018-23

RED LINES

Box 1 indicates "red lines" under discussion in a global community of practice working on agroecological indicators.[17] If any are present, the entire project is considered to be promoting conventional agriculture. In this paper the aim is not to write off entire policies (as we are conducting a different exercise) but it is important to highlight warning signs in the reviewed policy documents that indicate a contradictory path to the 13 agroecology principles. In the documents these relate to certain terms that flag a corporate and extractivist agenda, such as:

- competition (rather than cooperation),
- global competitiveness, export orientation,
- a single commodity approach to agriculture (rather than diversified and mixed farming systems),
- commodification of natural resources,
- market-led approaches,
- bankable business plans,
- promotion of synthetic fertilisers and toxic pesticides,
- public-private governance partnerships or other forms of private capture of decision-making processes,
- integration of smallholder farmers into corporate value chains,
- exclusive intellectual property rights, and
- technology-driven approaches.

Red lines

1. GMO	Project introduces GMOs or associated genome-editing technologies
2. Synthetics	Project promotes synthetic fertilisers and pesticides
3. Monoculture	Project promotes extensive single cash crop production at the expense of diversified strategies
4. Productivity	Project focuses exclusively on productivity, resulting in avoidable destruction of vital ecosystems and their services
5. Seed systems	Project actively promotes regulations and/or actions that hamper and/or destroy local and farmer-managed seed systems
6. Factory farming	Project focuses on large-scale intensification of animal production (factory farming)
7. Women/marginalised	Project excludes or actively discriminates against women and other marginalised groups groups
8. Processed food	Project promotes highly processed, industrially produced foods (with low nutrient value)
9. Extractivism	Project promotes extractive raw material production without some local value addition
10. Human rights	Project promotes approaches that violate rights, including customary rights
11. Displacement	Project results in the displacement of local populations and/or land and resource grabbing
12. Consent	Project ignores or circumvents free prior and informed consent of affected communities
13. Participation	Project blocks participation of affected communities

17. Led by Coopération Internationale pour le Développement et la Solidarité (CIDSE) and the Centre for Agroecology, Water and Resilience (CAWR) at Coventry University

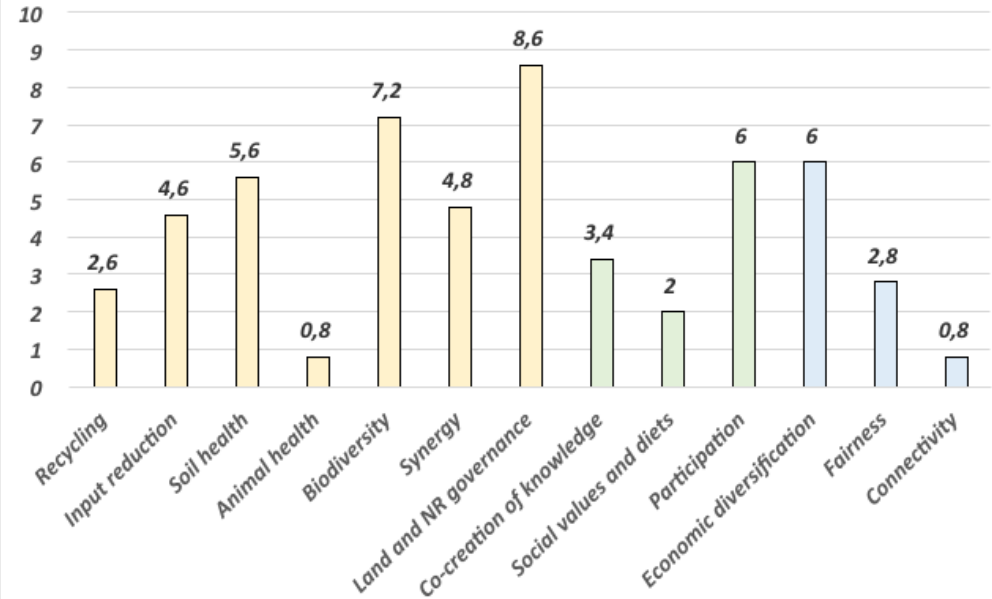
While there may be room to debate some of these terms, their presence indicates a corporate-financial hand in the crafting of policies that are not appropriate or relevant to the needs of the mass of the population for sustainable production and distribution of diverse, healthy and nutritional food to realise the right to food for all.
Some of these terms are found scattered in a number of the reviewed documents, but the main problematic policies are the AAMP and, to a lesser extent, these approaches are found in the Bioeconomy Strategy and the CCAMP. The AAMP in particular is centrally structured on these framings, while the CCAMP is a classic case of a contradictory document. As indicated below, the CCAMP actually contains some of the stronger elements in support of an agroecological approach, but it is mixed with neoliberalisms. This is an artifact of contested policy-making processes. Those with the money dictate the direction thereafter, through their investment decisions and budgetary allocations.

General policy support for sustainable agriculture

Based on the assessment, 12 of the reviewed policy documents are identified as offering general support for sustainable agriculture and an integration of environmental, social and economic dimensions in agriculture and food systems. Some of the documents are restricted to specific topics (e.g. biodiversity, animal health, or pesticide management) and therefore do not offer a comprehensive approach to agricultural support, but contribute as part of a suite. The analysis allows us to identify five key policy documents that more comprehensively promote a number of principles of agroecology. These are:

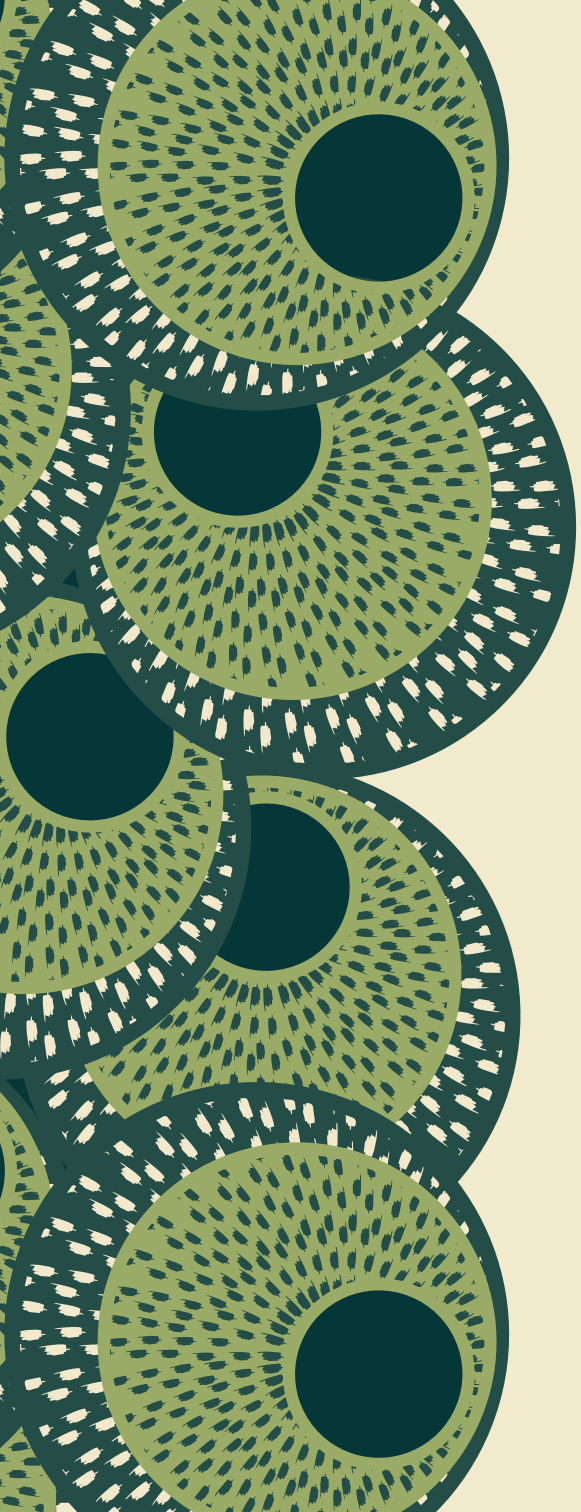
- Agriculture Sector Climate Change Adaptation and Mitigation Plan draft 2015
- National Policy on Comprehensive Producer Development Support draft 2019
- Conservation Agriculture Policy draft 2022
- White Paper on Conservation and Sustainable Use of Biodiversity draft 2022
- Just Transition Framework 2022

Figure 1: Assessment of five key policy documents using HLPE principles



Scores assessed out of 10, based on methodology in PSA Alliance, 2022

Figure 1 offers a scored assessment of support for agroecology principles across these five policies. It shows strong support for the principles of land and natural resource governance and biodiversity, and relatively strong support for participation and economic diversification in these documents. These are followed by soil health, synergy and input reduction. The principles with the weakest support are animal health, connectivity and social values and diets (with social diets pulling this down, as indicated earlier). Recycling, fairness and co-creation of knowledge are also relatively weakly supported. This essentially indicates that no single policy or small group of generally supportive policies are enough on their own to be used as a proxy for an agroecology strategy.



Why we call for a separate agroecology strategy

The assessment clearly shows that there are multiple elements of agroecology across many policies including agriculture, biodiversity, climate change, and land restoration. But in practice, there is continued support for conventional inputs and processes, especially through input subsidies in the farmer support programmes. Extension and training services remain focused on conventional agriculture. To build resilience and sustainability in the food system requires deliberate interventions to shift this state of affairs, including provision of more systematic support for integrated and integrating approaches like agroecology. Currently the different elements that could support an integrated approach are mostly being implemented piecemeal in different places (if at all), and thus have limited impact.

Using an agroecological framing offers an opportunity stronger and more explicit **integration** of agri-food systems, biodiversity and climate change response. This includes integrating agricultural production into wider ecosystem and landscape planning and management, including land restoration and maintenance, biodiversity conservation and sustainable use, and riparian systems. It also offers a framing for integration of primary production into

wider food systems, opening practical pathways for food system transformations in favour of currently marginalised producers and consumers. Elements of these principles appear in many of the reviewed policy documents, but are lost in the lack of a coherent strategy and implementation plan across policies.

An **agroecology strategy** that utilises a principles-based agroecology framing, integrates elements of existing policies and strengthens the principles as required, can generate coherence across a suite of policies. Our understanding is that DALRRD is planning a comprehensive policy review as it continues with institutional merging processes. This is an opportunity to review using an integrated approach based on agroecological principles and provide coherence to fragmented government policies across sectors, while remaining aligned in content and objectives.

An agroecology strategy can also offer the grounds for piloting multi-actor **place-based initiatives** where each principle is explicitly considered in programme design and implementation, and programmes and support are integrated in one place. Pilots should adopt an ecosystems / landscape approach, integrating agricultural production with biodiversity and wider natural resource governance and use, climate and disaster risk planning and response, and multi-actor processes going beyond individual plots or households. Such place-based initiatives are sites for learning, experimentation and materialisation of the strategy.

For more thoroughgoing transformation, there is also a need to **review the suite of commercial laws and policies** oriented towards regulating the large-scale commercial sector as indicated above, in particular to remove the obstacles to producers expanding their agroecological practices. This particularly applies to restrictions on the production and distribution of ecological inputs, restrictions which are designed for the large-scale commercial sector but are not always relevant for smaller-scale operations. In line with the strong basis in existing policy on the principle of participation, homestead and smallholder producer associations and other civil society organisations should be actively involved in review processes and in the development of appropriate quality controls for input production and supply, marketing etc.

Annex 1: Food sovereignty principles

Nyéléni Forum for Food Sovereignty,
23-27 February, 2007[18]

We, peasant farmers, pastoralists, fisherfolk, indigenous peoples, migrant workers, women and young people, who gathered at Nyéléni 2007 are food providers who are ready, able and willing to feed all the world's peoples. Our heritage as providers of food is critical to the future of humanity. This is especially so in the case of women and indigenous peoples who are historical creators of knowledge about food, agriculture and traditional aquaculture. But this heritage and our capacity to produce healthy, good and abundant food are being threatened and undermined by neo-liberalism and global capitalism.

We debated food sovereignty issues in order to:

a. deepen collective understanding;
b. strengthen dialogue among and between sectors and interest groups; and
c. formulate joint strategies and an action agenda.

Our debates gave food providers as well as environmentalists, consumers and urban movements the strength and power to fight for food sovereignty in Mali, the rest of Africa and worldwide.

Through our alliances, we can join together to preserve, recover and build on our knowledge in order to strengthen the essential capacity that leads to sustaining localised food systems. In realizing food sovereignty, we will also ensure the survival of our cultures, our peoples and of the Earth.

FOOD SOVEREIGNTY puts those who produce, distribute and need wholesome, local food at the heart of food, agricultural, livestock and fisheries systems and policies, rather than the demands of markets and corporations that reduce food to internationally tradeable commodities and components. It offers a strategy to resist and dismantle this inequitable and unsustainable system that perversely results in both chronic undernutrition and rapidly rising obesity.

Food sovereignty includes the right to food – the right of peoples to healthy and culturally appropriate food produced through socially just and ecologically sensitive methods. It entails peoples' right to participate in decision making and define their own

18. Nyeleni Forum for Food Sovereignty 2007. *Synthesis report*. https://www.nyeleni.org/IMG/pdf/31Mar2007NyeleniSynthesisReport-en.pdf

food, agriculture, livestock and fisheries systems. It defends the interests and inclusion of the next generation and supports new social relations free from oppression and inequality between men and women, peoples, racial groups and social classes. It promotes a genuine agrarian reform and defends access to, and the sharing of, productive territories free from the threat of privatisation and expulsion.

Food sovereignty defends the interests and the right to food and to produce food of peoples and communities, including those under occupation, in conflict zones, facing and/or recovering from disasters, as well as those who are socially and economically marginalised, such as dalits, indigenous peoples and migrant workers. Food sovereignty provides a policy] framework for food, farming, pastoral, fisheries and other food production, harvesting and gathering systems determined by local communities.

AT NYÉLÉNI 2007, we deepened our collective understanding of Food Sovereignty which:

1. Focuses on Food for People: Food sovereignty puts the right to sufficient, healthy and culturally appropriate food for all individuals, peoples and communities,

including those who are hungry, under occupation, in conflict zones and marginalised, at the centre of food, agriculture, livestock and fisheries policies; and rejects the proposition that food is just another commodity or component for international agri-business.

2. Values Food Providers: Food sovereignty values and supports the contributions, and respects the rights, of women and men, peasants and small scale family farmers, pastoralists, artisanal fisherfolk, forest dwellers, indigenous peoples and agricultural and fisheries workers, including migrants, who cultivate, grow, harvest and process food; and rejects those policies, actions and programmes that undervalue them, threaten their livelihoods and eliminate them.

3. Localises Food Systems: Food sovereignty brings food providers and consumers closer together; puts providers and consumers at the centre of decision-making on food issues; protects food providers from the dumping of food and food aid in local markets; protects consumers from poor quality and unhealthy food, inappropriate food aid and food tainted with GMOs; and resists governance structures, agreements and practices that depend on and promote unsustainable and inequitable international trade and give power to remote and unaccountable corporations.

4. Puts Control Locally: Food sovereignty places control over territory, land, grazing, water, seeds, livestock and fish populations on local food providers and respects their rights. They can use and share them in socially and environmentally sustainable ways which conserve diversity; it recognizes that local territories often cross geopolitical borders and ensures the right of local communities to inhabit and use their territories; it promotes positive interaction between food providers in different regions and territories and from different sectors that helps resolve internal conflicts or conflicts with local and national authorities; and rejects the privatisation of natural resources through laws, commercial contracts and intellectual property rights regimes.

5. Builds Knowledge and Skills: Food sovereignty builds on the skills and local knowledge of food providers and their local organisations that conserve, develop and manage localised food production and harvesting systems, developing appropriate research systems to support this and passing on this wisdom to future generations; and rejects technologies that undermine, threaten or contaminate these, e.g. genetic engineering.

6. Works with Nature: Food sovereignty uses the contributions of nature in diverse, low external input agroecological production and harvesting methods that maximise the contribution of ecosystems and improve resilience and adaptation, especially in the face of climate change; it seeks to heal the planet so that the planet may heal us; and, rejects methods that harm beneficial ecosystem functions, that depend on energy intensive monocultures and livestock factories, destructive fishing practices and other industrialised production methods, which damage the environment and contribute to global warming.

Annex 2: HLPE 13 agroecological principles with examples of good practice, areas for possible adaptation and alignment with food sovereignty principles

Dimension	HLPE principle	Description of principle	Indicators / examples of good practices	Areas for possible adaptation	Alignment with food sovereignty principles
Environmental sustainability	Recycling	Preferentially use local renewable resources and close as far as possible resource cycles of nutrients and biomass	On-farm use of renewable resources (including energy) On-farm nutrient / biomass recycling Wastewater and waste recycling Farm-saved seed (including seed banks and networks) Reusable or recyclable packaging		Works with nature
	Input reduction	Reduce or eliminate dependency on purchased inputs and increase self-sufficiency	Water use efficiency (including water harvesting, drip irrigation, on-farm water storage) Reduce or eliminate dependency on synthetic inputs (including fertilisers and pesticides, industrial or imported feed) Reduced waste/losses at harvesting, processing, storage or post-harvest Farm-saved seed (including seed banks and networks) On-farm fodder production Reduced on-farm or supply chain energy use Elimination of heavy, soil-damaging machinery		Works with nature

Dimension	HLPE principle	Description of principle	Indicators / examples of good practices	Areas for possible adaptation	Alignment with food sovereignty principles
	Soil health	Secure and enhance soil health and functioning for improved plant growth, particularly by managing organic matter and enhancing soil biological activity	Biological soil fertility measures (including compost, manure, vermiculture, effective microorganisms) No till or minimum till Cover cropping, green manure, mulch, permanent ground cover Legumes for nitrogen fixation Monitoring of soil health / biological activity to evaluate practices	Link with water	Works with nature
	Animal health	Ensure animal health and welfare	Adapted local breeds able to give birth without aid Consistent and regular outdoor access for animals, natural environment for roaming Free range poultry, fully grass-fed ruminants Number of animals aligned to carrying capacity of land and water Elimination or reduced use of antibiotics and growth hormones for livestock Natural medication wherever possible Improved animal housing and sheds Safe and humane slaughtering and transport practices. Integrated pollinator management Fodder trees and crops		Works with nature

Dimension	HLPE principle	Description of principle	Indicators / examples of good practices	Areas for possible adaptation	Alignment with food sovereignty principles
	Biodiversity	Maintain and enhance diversity of species, functional diversity and genetic resources and thereby maintain overall agroecosystem biodiversity in time and space at field, farm and landscape scales.	Use of local, traditional, indigenous or 'orphan' crops, breeds and varieties (animals, trees, crops, fish) In-field production diversity Encouraging of particular species (e.g. pollinators, pest predators, wild companion plants) through habitat management Conservation of forest fragments around farms, conversion of field edges into woodlands Multi-habitat approaches (land use diversity at landscape level) Multi-year crop rotation Biological soil fertility measures No or low till		Puts control locally; Works with nature
	Land and natural resource governance	Strengthen institutional arrangements to improve, including the recognition and support of family farmers, smallholders and peasant food producers as sustainable managers of natural and genetic resources.	Community-based natural resource management Land tenure that respects traditional and customary land rights and ensure equitable and secure access to land for smallholders/ family farmers and peasant food producers Land redistribution and restitution Participatory land use planning, landscape design Participatory biosphere conservation and restoration, catchment management Control of inland and marine water resources by coastal/fishing communities Improving the enabling policy environment for agroecology, sustainable land use and natural resource management	Participatory ecosystem, landscape, watershed and natural resource management and governance Land redistribution	Puts control locally; Works with nature

Dimension	HLPE principle	Description of principle	Indicators / examples of good practices	Areas for possible adaptation	Alignment with food sovereignty principles
	Synergy	Enhance positive ecological interaction, synergy, integration and complementarity among the elements of agroecosystems (animals, crops, trees, soil and water)	Guild and companion planting, intercropping Non-crop plants for ecological functions Ecosystem services Polycultures and mixed farming (agroforestry, crop-tree-livestock-fish integration) Cover cropping, green manures or permanent ground cover Manure and compost for soil fertility Legumes for nitrogen fixation Fodder trees and crops Rotational / regenerative grazing Integrated pest management through habitat management Integrated landscape planning / territorial approach Climate change response through system redesign		Works with nature
Social justice and redress	Co-creation of knowledge	Enhance co-creation and horizontal sharing of knowledge including local and scientific innovation, especially through farmer-to-farmer exchange.	Farmer to farmer learning and exchanges inc farmer field schools Farmer research and experimentation groups Farmer and research co-innovation / participatory research Communities of practice on agroecology Traditional and indigenous knowledge Capacity building on climate and agroecology		Puts control locally; Builds knowledge and skills

Dimension	HLPE principle	Description of principle	Indicators / examples of good practices	Areas for possible adaptation	Alignment with food sovereignty principles
	Social values and diets	Build food systems based on the culture, identity, tradition, social and gender equity of local communities that provide healthy, diversified, seasonally and culturally appropriate diets.	Right to food, farmers rights Promotion of food sovereignty Explicit and open discussion of structural inequalities and how to overcome them Gender equity and youth empowerment Valorisation of traditional/ indigenous knowledge and practices Local seed and food fairs Promotion of traditional and indigenous crops and diets Culturally appropriate nutrition and dietary diversity Healthy and diversified diets Research into health-promoting qualities of traditional diets	Solidarity / mutual aid Nutrition	Food for people; Value food producers; Puts control locally
	Participation	Encourage social organization and greater participation in decision-making by food producers and consumers to support decentralized governance and local adaptive management of agricultural and food systems.	Active participation of women, youth, indigenous and other marginalised groups in leadership and decision-making Participatory food system governance (including policy development, food councils) Multi-actor food system processes, communities of practice Democratic producer and community organisation Decentralised decision-making	Emphasis on women, youth, marginalised	Value food producers; Puts control locally; Builds knowledge and skills

Dimension	HLPE principle	Description of principle	Indicators / examples of good practices	Areas for possible adaptation	Alignment with food sovereignty principles
Economic justice and participation	Economic diversification	Diversify on-farm incomes by ensuring that small-scale farmers have greater financial independence and value addition opportunities while enabling them to respond to demand from consumers	Product diversification On-farm agroprocessing and storage Farm-based or local bulk input production for distribution (seed, seedlings, trees, biofertilisers, biopesticides) SMME development and support in agro-food value chains Farm-based non-agricultural activities (e.g. crafts, agri-tourism, eco-tourism, services) Women and youth-managed and -owned enterprises		
	Fairness	Support dignified and robust livelihoods for all actors engaged in food systems, especially small-scale food producers, based on fair trade, fair employment and fair treatment of intellectual property rights.	An end to exploitation of workers in agri-food systems Decent jobs and working conditions in the agro-food system Social wage, living wages paid to workers, wage equality between workers Social mechanisms to reduce vulnerability Occupational health and safety provisions in place and acted on Land redistribution Equitable access to natural resources Diverse ownership, including women and youth Fair exchange and fair prices Equitable benefit sharing from genetic resources Fair treatment of intellectual property rights Equitable and collective ownership models	Including equity in ownership Land redistribution	Value food producers

Dimension	HLPE principle	Description of principle	Indicators / examples of good practices	Areas for possible adaptation	Alignment with food sovereignty principles
	Connectivity	Ensure proximity and confidence between producers and consumers through promotion of fair and short distribution networks and by re-embedding food systems into local economies.	Local farmer markets, public procurement for local consumption Emphasis on food production for local and then domestic need before export markets Worker cooperatives, community-supported agriculture (CSA), participatory guarantee systems (PGS) Re-establishing connections between producers and consumers Access to markets emphasising short supply chains and local food webs Community restaurants, soup kitchens, food relief Encourage and sensitise for regional and seasonal demand Local food actor dialogues and networks (including producers, consumers, other supply chain actors, governance agents)	Incorporate markets, with an emphasis on local and informal markets in SA and African context, public procurement	Localises food systems; Puts control locally

Source: Adapted from HLPE, 2019; PSA Alliance, 2022 both cited above

Annex 3: Policy documents reviewed

Note: Documents reviewed in detail for agroecological components are marked with*. The organic and agroecology draft policies were not included in the analysis here as they are considered 'dead' policies. They will be analysed in a separate paper along with climate smart and conservation agriculture.

Document	Date	Lead entity
Fertiliser, Farm Remedies, Agricultural Remedies and Stock Remedies Act 36	1947	DALRRD
*Animal Protection Act 71	1962	DALRRD
*Conservation of Agricultural Resources Act 43	1983	DALRRD
Agricultural Products Standards Act 119	1990	DALRRD
Genetically Modified Organisms Act 15	1997	DALRRD
*National Environmental Management Act 107	1998	DFFE
*Pesticide Management Policy	2010	DALRRD
National Organic Production Policy (draft 10)	2010	DALRRD
National Strategy on Agroecology (draft 8)	2013	DALRRD
*Bioeconomy Strategy	2013	DSI
Agricultural Policy Action Plan 2015-2019	2014	DALRRD
*Agriculture Sector Climate Change Adaptation and Mitigation Plan (draft)	2015	DALRRD
*National Framework on SME Agroprocessing Support	2016	DALRRD
*National Policy on Extension and Advisory Services	2016	DALRRD
*National Food and Nutrition Strategy 2018-23	2017	Presidency

Document	Date	Lead entity
*National Plan for Conservation and Sustainable Use of Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture	2017	DALRRD
Plant Improvement Act 11	2018	DALRRD
Plant Breeders Rights Act 12	2018	DALRRD
*Climate Smart Agriculture Framework (draft)	2018	DALRRD
*National Water and Sanitation Master Plan	2018	DWS
*Protection, Promotion, Development and Management of Indigenous Knowledge Act 6	2019	Presidency
*National Climate Change Adaptation Strategy	2019	DFFE
*National Policy on Comprehensive Producer Development Support (draft 7 v2)	2019	DALRRD
*National Waste Management Strategy	2020	DFFE
*SMME-Focused Localisation Policy Framework in South Africa	2020	DSBD
*National Water Resources Strategy 3 (draft v2.6)	2021	DWS
*Conservation Agriculture Policy (draft)	2022	DALRRD
*Just Transition Framework	2022	PCC
*Agriculture and Agroprocessing Master Plan	2022	DALRRD
*White Paper on Conservation and Sustainable Use of Biodiversity (draft)	2022	DFFE