
MINUTES SFRAS MEETING 14 MAY 2019

CLIMATE RESILIENT AGRICULTURE

Location	FiBL, Frick
Participants	SFRAS members (f2f). In the thematic session, interested A+FS network members could join online
Recipients	SFRAS members, A&FS Shareweb

Topics (→ Points for follow-up)

1 Thematic session: Climate Smart Agroecology & RAS

- **How agroecology contributes to climate change adaptation and mitigation (Adrian Müller, FiBL)**

- Adrian reflects on the definition of AE and on how agroecology may be measured? Often reports on AE come from successful case studies, reporting on the best agroecological practices, they might thus be biased. He encourages to look more at how “average” agroecology functions. He also brings up the concept of “resilience” that is often linked to AE, as agroecological approaches seek to decrease the vulnerability of the agroecosystems. Which proxies can measure the resilience: yield stability or adaptation to climate change or others? On which time scale should we measure resilience?

He critically reflects that the role and potential of institutions, RAS and Finance for achieving more climate resilience in AE systems and suggests more meta analyses that look at the performance of agroecological practices and their single characteristics

- **Community-based approaches in Brazil (Judith Macchi, HEKS)**

- Judith has worked with a traditional flower picking community in the Cerrado region in Brazil. These nomadic communities move to higher lands with all their livestock to pick flowers. Thanks to their land management, they have become the first *Globally Important Agricultural Heritage System* GIAHS in Brazil. GIAHS are outstanding landscapes of aesthetic beauty, resilient ecosystems and a valuable cultural heritage (FAO). Judith explains that the GIAHS process strengthened the communities’ identities and their understanding of their role, responsibilities and rights as a safeguard for the resilience of an ecosystem.

- **Climate & Agroecology Project Nicaragua (Sarah Mader, Swissaid)**

- Sarah explains that there are many areas in Nicaragua where water scarcity as become an increasing issue. Unfortunately, there is a lack of information and knowledge on the side of the farmers, who struggle to adapt their production techniques to the changing climatic conditions. A vast communication strategy is thus supported to raise awareness on climate change via radio, brochures, TV, posters, workshops. Involving **youth** was identified as an important driver of change as they represent effective promoters of new practices to reduce risk (diversification, crop rotations, soil mulch, water harvesting techniques, local seeds...).

- **Climate-resilient organic rice in India (Frank Eyhorn, Helvetas)**

- Frank showed how conversion to agroecological organic farming increased resilience in rice agroecosystems and communities in India. The project initiated by the private sector includes promotion of a System of Rice Intensification (SRI) that allows to decrease the inputs (water, fertilizer, pesticides) whilst increasing the outputs (yields). Frank concluded on the key learnings regarding
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resilience: a) applying organic principles makes food systems more resilient, b) adoption of organic practices mainly depends on profitability, c) water management, farm mechanization and market linkages are key, d) RAS are effective and viable if integrated in value chains.

See slides for detailed input presentations.

Discussion along key questions:

(1) How can we use agroecology (AE) to enhance climate resilience?

AE enhances adaptation to climate change (by improving soil health, diversity, stability of income) and resilience against natural disasters and market fluctuations. Natural habitats store carbon and allow communities to diversify incomes (wild collection). While diversity allows reducing risks and increasing productivity in terms of biomass (including weeds...), there is no clear evidence that temporal yield stability is enhanced (lack of data). Climate resilience is enhanced if promotion of AE is combined with improved water management (including harvesting), the use of locally adapted varieties and reforestation.

(2) What opportunities and challenges does this offer for RAS?

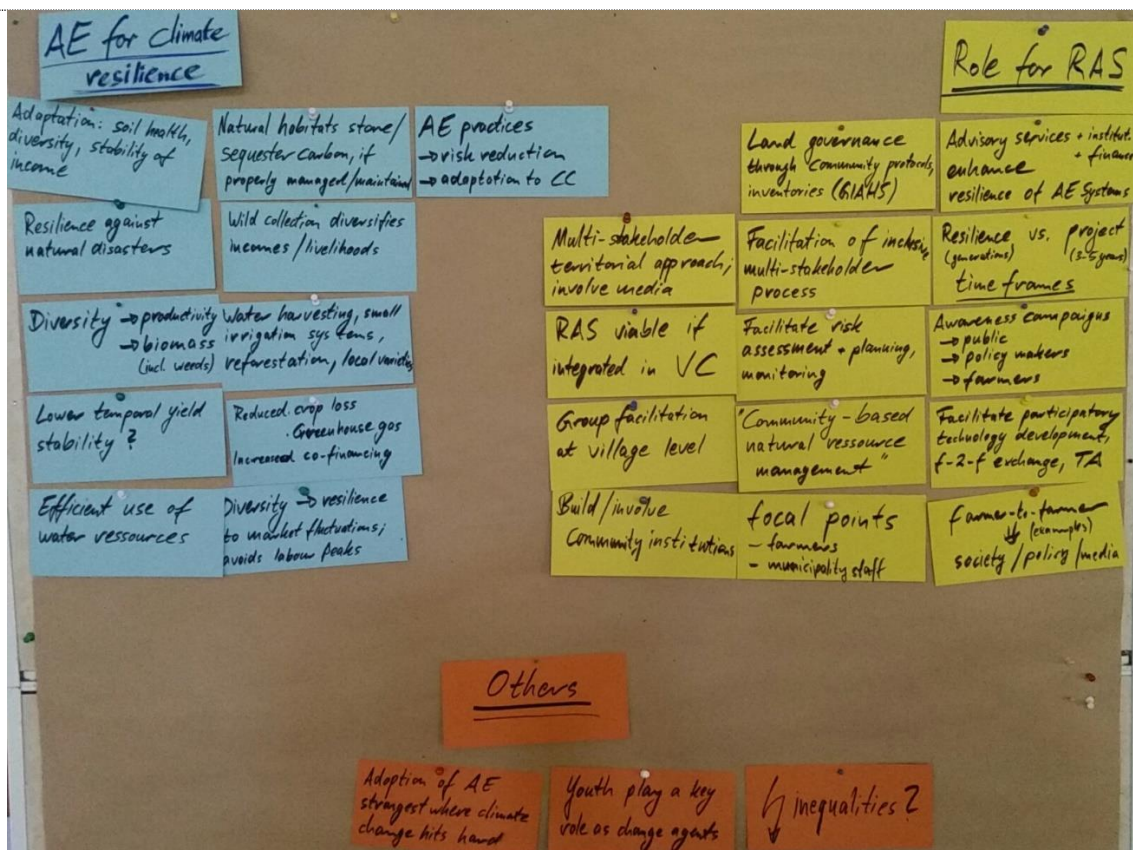
RAS can considerably contribute to the adoption of AE systems and enhance their resilience. A key function of RAS is to facilitate inclusive multi-stakeholder processes and support the development of community institutions related to natural resource management and land governance. They can facilitate participatory technology development of AE practices and assist in risk assessment, planning and monitoring. They can convey successful examples from farmer to farmer, but also to the wider society and to policy makers, e.g. by involving media. Engaged individual farmers and municipality employees can serve as focal points to promote AE approaches.

A key requirement is that RAS are economically viable, which in some cases can be achieved by integrating them in value chains. One problem is that resilience has long timeframes, while project phases often only cover 3-5 years.

Other aspects to consider

Adoption of AE seems to be particularly strong where climate change hits hard. Youth plays a key role as change agents. One needs to ensure that interventions do not aggravate inequalities.

See pinboard below for points collected and discussed.



2 Follow-up on RAS Advocacy Strategy

While Ueli Mauderli and Stefanie Kägi thought to have identified a strong interest in the SFRAS meeting in Lucerne, only few people participated in the subsequent webinar and online discussion. Since most participants of today's meeting had not been in the Lucerne meeting, it is difficult for them to identify the reasons of this low participation.

→ Ueli will follow up by email asking if there still is a need for a new (advocacy) strategy or if we can continue as before (= focus on the exchange function).

3 Update from GFRAS (See slides by Joep Slaats)

GFRAS works on various advocacy papers related to RAS. It can link to experts providing consultancy. SFRAS members are welcome to present cases in the next General Annual Meeting in Jamaica (30 Sep to 3 Oct). → A call for contributions will be spread out soon.

One focus will be on disaster risk management. → Judith can link GFRAS with the Swiss NGO group working on this topic.

4 News from members regarding RAS / Varia

Ernst: SDC commissioned an evaluation of W-African farmer organisations advocacy/policy (macro-level); report to come out soon – excerpts of it, which are interesting regarding RAS, might then be shared with SFRAS

Erich: At the term of the presentations, the question on what is Agroecology vs. sustainable agriculture remains unsolved. Answering this question would require a longer session, and therefore it remained open.

Ueli: A Global Brief on RAS was produced. Ueli will share it with SFRAS members to collect potential comments.

5 Brief tour of FiBL, presentation of FiBL advisory service