
MINUTES SFRAS MEETING – AGROERCOLOGY & AGROFORESTRY IN RAS I

Host HELVETAS Swiss Intercooperation
 Weinbergstrasse 22a
 8021 Zurich

Meeting mode: Hybrid

Date & time: 24th August 2022, 9-12 am

Facilitation: David Bexte, Helvetas; Riff Fullan, Helvetas; Paul Castle, Syngenta Foundation

Participants SFRAS members

Recipients SFRAS members, A&FS Shareweb

Minutes written by: David Bexte, Helvetas

Agenda

Time	Input
9:15-9:30	Welcoming & brief introduction SFRAS <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Technical introduction• SFRAS introduction
9:30-9:45	Farmers' learning and understanding: An inventory of selected Sufosec learning models and tools for Agroecology, presented by Sarah Mader (Swissaid, SUFOSEC representative)
9:45-9:55	Q&A
9:55-10:20	Group Work (focus on application of learning models)
10:20-10:30	Debrief
10:30-10:45	Break
10:45-11:00	News from members
11:00-11:15	Food System Learning Journey – Bruce Campbell (SDC)
11:15-11:35	Agroforestry in Switzerland – Lisa Nilles (AGRIDEA)
11:35-11:50	Q&A
11:50-12:00	Closing & Outlook <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Feedback form

Participants

1	David Bexte	HELNETAS
2	Riff Fullan	HELNETAS
3	Patricia Fry	HAFL
4	Paul Castle	Syngenta Foundation
5	Marnie Pannatier	Syngenta Foundation
6	Christina Grünewald	Swisscontact
7	Malte Reshoeft	HEKS
8	Shruti Patel	ETH
9	Martin Schmid	Biovision
10	Sarah Mader	Swissaid
11	Christa Suter	Fastenaktion
12	Lisa Nilles	AGRIDEA
13	Bruce Campbell	SDC
14	Rudolf Lüthi	HELNETAS

Thematic session

All presentations are available [here](#).

Introduction to SFRAS (by David Bexte, Helvetas)

- Welcoming all participants;
- **Meeting schedule:** In general 2 meetings per year are planned – however, in spring and before the summer break this year people were adjusting to the new normal and catching up with delayed/paused activities therefore a meeting did not take place – in order to make up for that this meeting is the 1st part of a mini-meeting series on agroecology and agroforestry – the 2nd meeting is planned at the end of November.
- The 13th **GFRAS annual meeting** will take place in Chile October 25-27 focussing on nutrition-sensitive extension; if you are attending the event it would be appreciated to get in contact with David Bexte (SFRAS coordinator) to see how key messages could be integrated into the agenda of the next meeting, for more information see <https://www.g-fras.org/en/eventseng/2021-gfras-annual-meeting.html> .

Farmers' learning and understanding: An inventory of selected Sufosec learning models and tools for Agroecology (by Sarah Mader (Swissaid), SUFOSEC representative)

Sarah Mader on behalf of the SUFOSEC alliance presented the synthesis report of the 1st phase of the Agroecological learning journey. The alliance is a partnership of 6 Swiss NGOs and CSOs in 27 countries which started in 2021 (with a duration until 2024) co-funded by SDC. The Agroecological Learning Group collects and synthesises knowledge and experiences across different organisations and countries and aims to make (co-created) knowledge available to Sufosec members, partners and external actors, and improve future programme interventions and performance on agroecology.

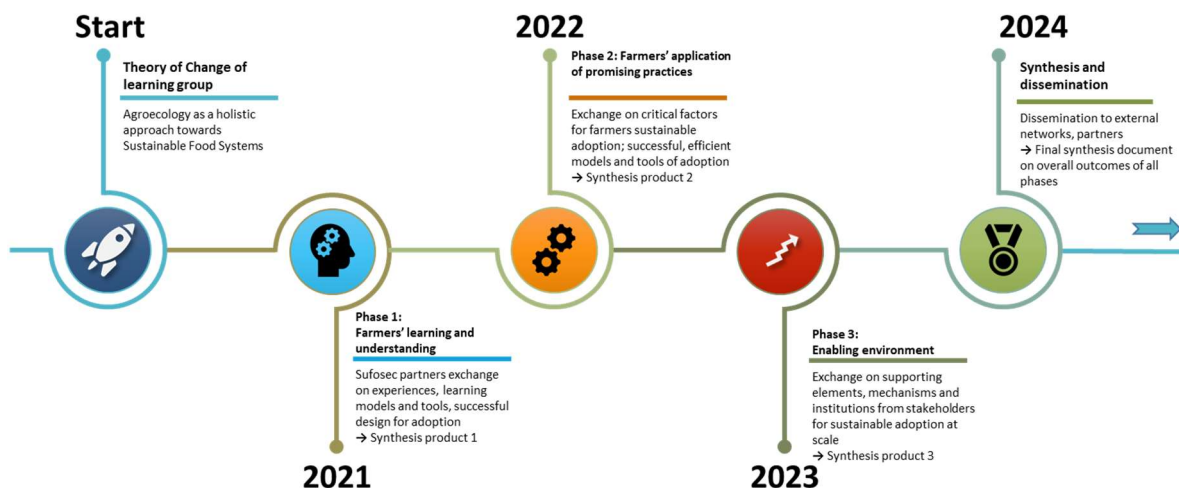


Figure 1: Overview of the foreseen process

The synthesis report focuses on 5 categories and within the categories highlights particular practices:

1. Learning by observing: Demonstration plots, model farms;
2. Learning by doing: Farmer Field Schools; Solidarity Groups / Farmer Family Learning Groups;
3. Learning by researching: Participatory Research, Farmer-led research;
4. Learning from other farmers: Farmer-to-Farmer Approach;
5. Mass learning tools: ICT Platforms e-learning for Agroecology, Community Radio Stations, Theatres;

Each practice is described in detail (short description, advantages, disadvantages, critical success factors, hindering factors and group verdict on appropriateness). For more details please consult the report which is accessible on the A&FS shareweb https://www.shareweb.ch/site/Agriculture-and-Food-Security/focusareas/Documents/agroecology_keydoc_sufosec_e.pdf. Finally, the report includes a synthesis of successful and hindering factors for farmers' learning and understanding for agroecological practices in general.

In case you are interested in being part of the journey you are invited to join the second online event. The event takes place in October as part of the agroecology days and is offered in 3 different languages at individual dates: 4th October (13h00 – 15h00 Swiss time, french), 11th (15h00 – 17h00, spanish) & 18th (09h00 – 11h00, english). See https://skat-foundation.ch/join-the-agroecology-learning-journey-of-the-sufosec-alliance/?utm_source=rss&utm_medium=rss&utm_campaign=join-the-agroecology-learning-journey-of-the-sufosec-alliance for more information & registration.

Q&A:

- One participant asked if as part of the journey experts on continuous learning are included. It was pointed out that for success the setup is important but also to understand how adults learn. In response it was mentioned that the journey will be accompanied by a bigger study on co-creation of learning. The study will be done in collaboration with HAFL, and it should address the aspect of continuous learning.
- It was clarified that the workshops in October are public events, and anyone can participate. However, for logistical reasons the number of maximum participants is 100 and preference will be given to SUFOSEC partners.
- One participant shared his observation that most methods are producer-oriented, and he asked for more information to which degree a consumer perspective will be addressed. In response it was said that in order not to lose focus SUFOSEC decided to concentrate on agroecological practices on the ground and on the production side. However, of course the 13 principles and

ten elements of agroecology guide the work of SUFOSEC and therefore a holistic understanding of agroecology forms the base for the journey.

Group work and debrief

3 working groups were formed and asked to respond to the following questions:

- Where do you see strengths & weaknesses of the different leaning models described in the synthesis? (You can also zoom in on one particular approach is of particular interest in your group)
- Does your organization apply similar or different models?
- If yes, what has worked for you? If no, which other models do you use?

Debrief

- Group 1: Firstly, the group in its presentation highlighted the importance of seeing the practices as complementary. Secondly, when applying the models de-risking and proof of concept are important elements. In other words, it needs to be avoided that the risk is with the participants. Furthermore, make sure that it is tailored to the context and “mix & match”! Thirdly, always consider what is happening down-stream starting from the production. Last but not least, the group discussed if it is possible to create self-sustaining models?
- Group 2:
 - Group 2 underlined that mixing is key. However, how do we find the right mix? Potential good answers could be provided by a thorough analysis of the existing learning system in place. In addition, the well-organized exchange between different expertise, a good physical environment and a good quality of facilitation are key factors for successful learning. The group asked the question if it means that one must put more emphasis on the capacity building of the facilitators.
 - For the learning the quality and capacities of both public and private extension services already in place should be considered. Furthermore, informal meeting places might be important and effective places for joint learning. Finally, how is it possible to strengthen an adaptive approach in capacity building related to agroecological practices?
- Group 3: The group started her debrief by pointing out that equally important as good methods is it to have an interested, motivated and supportive partner in place. Furthermore, it was highlighted that on the one hand, you need a long-time horizon for change to happen as learning/shifting practices till they become natural takes time. However, at the same time quick wins, e.g. reduction of costs, are necessary to get partners and stakeholders on board.

Last remarks:

- The session was concluded with a brief discussion on what helps to find the best mix. Improved coordination, e.g. by setting up thematic networks on agroecology, was mentioned as one key element. Ms Nilles informed all participants that AGRIDEA is promoting and pushing for the establishment of a network on alternative agricultural practices (including agroecology, permaculture, agroforestry) starting next year – for more information and if interested to join please contact Ms Nilles directly.
Another answer was given by HELVETAS. By applying a systems approach complex settings and their dynamic are well captured. What is crucial here is setting the right system boundaries and a good targeting. In addition, understanding indigenous knowledge systems is important. If partners are showing resistance a conflict-sensitive approach can help to overcome it. A conflict-sensitive approach enables you to understand the underlying tensions causing the resistance.

News from members

- SDC - update on SDC reorganization: From 1st September 2022 the new SDC structure will be officially in place. The Global Program food security will be called Section for Food Systems under the new division thematic cooperation. You can access the new organigram under the following link <https://www.eda.admin.ch/deza/en/home/sdc/organisation.html> In addition, the Agriculture & Food Security network will be renamed as Agriculture and Food System Network <https://www.shareweb.ch/site/agriculture-and-food-security> and use a new logo.
- HEKS – merger with Brot für Alle: The 2 organizations became one keeping the name HEKS. Furthermore, there is an interesting new project implemented jointly with a partner organization on territorial markets.
- HELNETAS:
 - A study on living incomes as part of the COOP organic rice project is currently conducted. It includes a calculation of the equal profit along the value chain and of the living income reference price (LRIP).
 - The WAPRO project is offering several information products on water saving technologies. Rural21 published an article on water saving technologies featuring lessons learned and best practices from the project – accessible via the following link [Water saving technologies in rice and cotton production: Experience from Helvetas - www.rural21.com](http://www.rural21.com). Furthermore, a topic sheet on water saving technologies is accessible for everyone via the Helvetas Homepage under the following link [TopicSheet_1_WAPRO_WaterEfficiency_EN_01.pdf \(helvetas.org\)](#). Last but not least a survey on water saving technologies is currently being conducted.
- A participant asked concerning public feedback on the HELNETAS decision to substantially reduce gifts in mailings when reaching out to new potential donors. This was openly communicated in the public. – Response: Helvetas received a lot of positive feedback in response and a large majority welcomed the decision.
- Swisscontact – restructuring process: One important change is the integration of the Springfield Center into the thematic teams. Furthermore, there will be a new thematic core area on climate change covering climate change related topics.

Food System Learning Journey (by Bruce Campbell, SDC)

In his presentation Bruce Campbell outlined the plans for the upcoming food systems learning journey. The Food Systems Learning Journey (FSLJ) is available to all its AFS network members worldwide and anyone interested. It will take place September 2022 - June 2023. One major objective is to provide participants with enhanced knowledge and skills to address their objectives from a regional food systems viewpoint

The FSLJ consists of a series of physical regional workshops concluded by a summative event and introduced by an online introduction event.

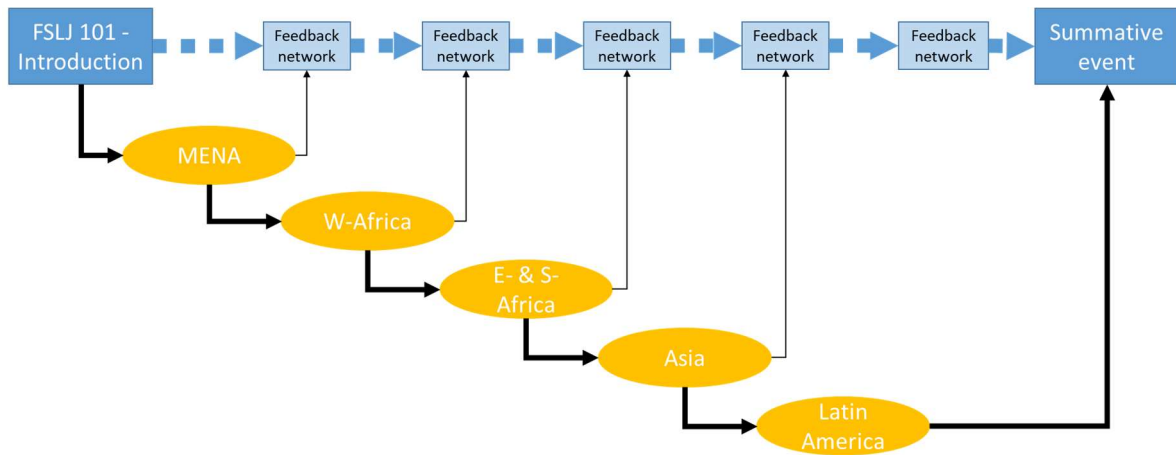


Figure 2: Foreseen series of events

Each workshop will include virtual sessions and in-person sessions.

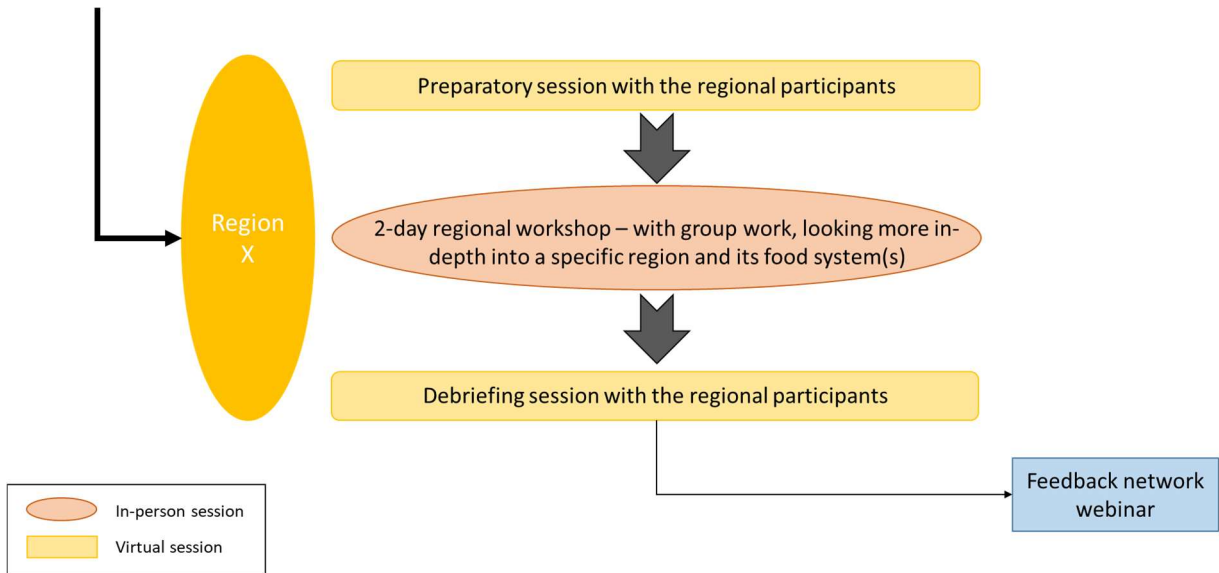


Figure 3: Set-up regional workshops

For the exact dates and updates please see the presentation and/or access the FSLJ homepage <https://www.shareweb.ch/site/Agriculture-and-Food-Security/news/Pages/Food-Systems-Learning-Journey.aspx> You can register here https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSdKzI1OqMq_igwrEM-EhMHL4KdOg1sM-Pr97OpoK5XLQXz8TQ/viewform For specific enquiries on the FSLJ you can write to afsnw@eda.admin.ch

Q&A:

- There was the question if food systems in Switzerland will be discussed as well. – Unfortunately due to limited resources a specific regional focus on North America/Europe is not possible.

Agroforestry in Switzerland (by Lisa Nilles, AGRIDEA)

Ns Nilles first outlined the differences between traditional and modern agroforestry in Switzerland. Modern agroforestry utilizes trees and hedges in a way that modern machinery is not hindered. She showed how modern agroforestry was applied for the 1st time in 2009. The Project Agroforst Netzwerk

Schweiz¹ (2014-2018) and the Resource Project Agro4esterie² (ongoing) mark important milestones in spreading modern agroforestry and building knowledge on agroforestry in Switzerland.

While agroforestry is more and more promoted substantial challenges and hurdles remain. Those include Longevity / protection of trees³, no „Agroforestry“ System in politics and the need to know a lot for a proper application of modern agroforestry. While various institutions are active in providing advisory services the weakness of public institutions at canton level remains a major bottleneck. Nevertheless, there are some positive initiatives such as the Klimaneutrales Graubünden which addresses agroforestry with the support of external consulting.

While many positive effects of agroforestry have been recognized it has not yet translated into political decisions creating a more enabling environment for agroforestry. For instance, there is no specific subsidy for agroforestry yet and only some cantons have a program. In addition, the suspension of the discussions on AP22+ is a worrying sign. Ms Nilles concluded her presentation with the important reminder that agroforestry offers solutions for all 4 measures of the Strategy for future sustainable agriculture and food production and needs to be well anchored in important policy documents.

In sum, modern agroforestry in Switzerland is very diverse and there is a particular model for each farm. However, the big challenge is the uncertainty mainly due to weak political signals. That matters a lot as establishing successful agroforestry systems requires a long-time horizon.

Q&A:

- A participant asked about a non-machinery agroforestry model/ dynamic agroforestry model developed by Götsch⁴. – The implementation of that model is difficult in Switzerland. It includes the planning of wood. However, in that case the regulation for woodlands applies and it is not considered as agriculture anymore.
- Another challenge which came up in the Q&A is the problem of how to statistically document it and register it. Standard measurements, e.g. field sizes in hectares, normally used in industrial agriculture are difficult to apply in modern agroforestry.

Closing

The moderator thanked all participants for joining in person or online and thereby closed the meeting.

¹ <https://www.agroforst.ch/projekte/projekt-agroforst-netzwerk-schweiz-2014-bis-2018/>

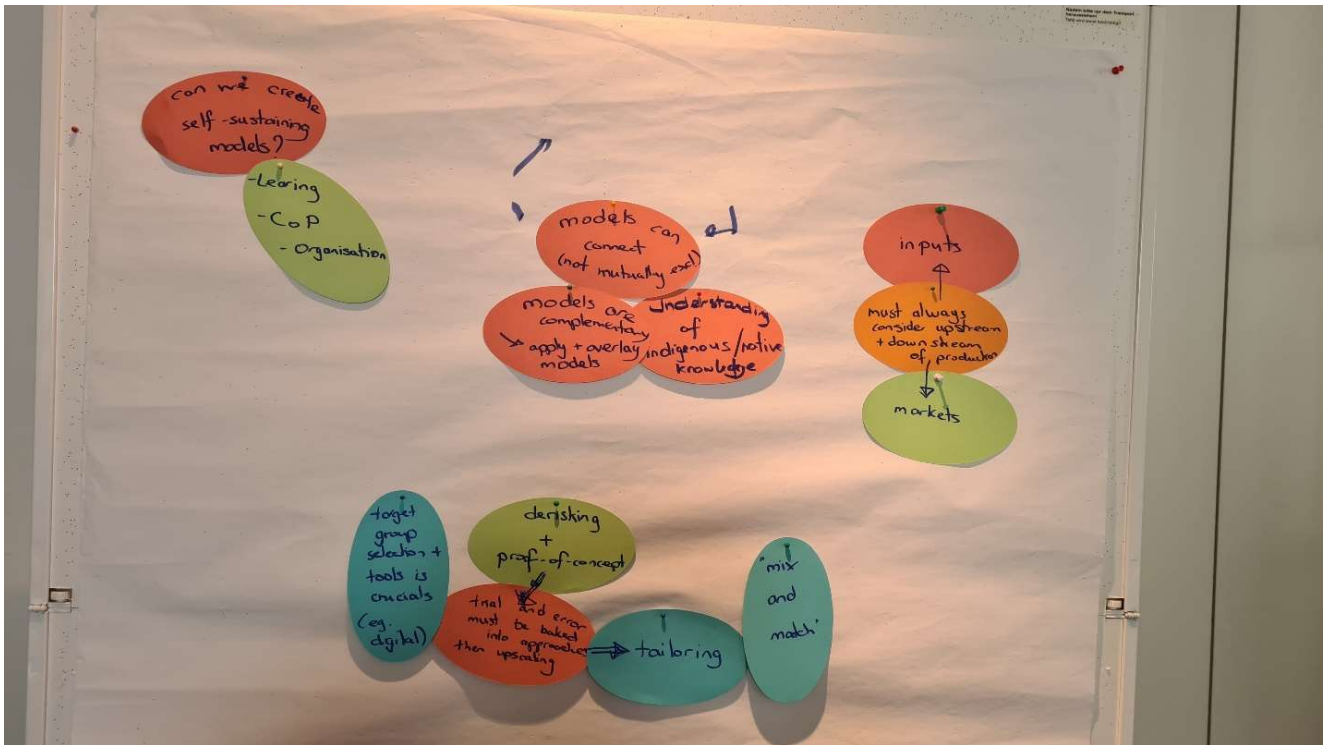
² <https://www.agroforst.ch/projet-ressource-agro4esterie-de/>

³ Some cantons have a rule that after a certain time trees are protected, and it is not allowed to cut them anymore - so they can't be used anymore.

⁴ <https://agendagotsch.com/en/ernst-gotsch/> & <https://www.permadynamics.net/syntropy.html>

Annex 1 Group Work

Group 1:



Group 2:

